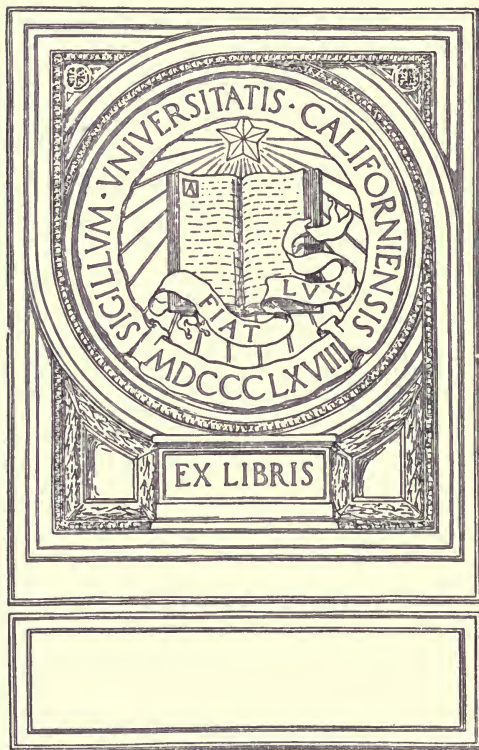


ON BOARD A WHALER

BY
THOMAS W. HAMMOND







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"FOR MANY MONTHS WE HAD NOT SEEN THE OLD FLAG."

ON BOARD A WHALER

An Adventurous Cruise through
Southern Seas

By

Thomas West Hammond

Illustrated by

Harry George Burgess

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PREFACE

IT is now thirty years since the voyage of which I have written ended, and the lapse of so much time should have dimmed my recollection of some of the incidents related; and yet those incidents have often risen so clearly before me while writing as almost to convince me that I was setting down the identical words employed by the various participators.

One who desires to spin the yarn of an American whaler of half a century ago has no need to call fiction to his aid. The romantic life of that old-time sea hunter is so thoroughly a thing of the past as to need no embellishments borrowed from the imagination.

If there are any gaps in my recollection of this cruise of other days,—and such gaps could involve only minor details,—I have not hesitated to exercise the privilege of a seaman, and trust the story will have lost nothing by reason of any failure of my memory.

For obvious reasons, the names of my shipmates, as well as of the vessel, have been purposely disguised. If the story shall come to be read by any of my old comrades they will hardly fail to recognize the ship and her crew; but no other reader need acquire any more intimate acquaintance with either of them than is afforded by the book.

T. W. H.

TACOMA, May 15, 1900.





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ON BOARD A WHALER



ON BOARD A WHALER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I N the spring of 1868, while yet a boy in my eighteenth year, I was living at Mattapoisett, on the shores of Buzzard's Bay. My ancestors were among the founders of the Plymouth colony, and many of them had at some previous time been engaged in the whale fishery. A considerable fleet of whalers had once sailed from our little port; but during the Civil War the rebel *Alabama* captured and burned most of it, and the industry was fast becoming a tradition among us. There were, however, still many retired seamen living in the town who were fond of relating their experiences, and my first and most pleasing recollections are of tales told by them.

It was after listening to an account of the capture

of a sperm whale, told by my own uncle, with all the enthusiastic imagination of a true sailor, that I formed the resolution to take part in such scenes as he had depicted; and, not permitting time to cool my ardor, rushed home to announce:

“ Mother, I ’m going whaling.”

“ Mercy, Tom!”

“ What do yeh say? Don’t yeh think yeh can get me ready to sail by next week? Macy Bowman ’s going then, and I mean to ship with him, if I can.”

My mother stared vacantly beyond me for a moment, and then burst out with:

“ It ’s all Charle’s work. He ’s been telling you some more of his nonsense about whales. I ’ll warrant he did n’t say a word about the rusty pork, the wormy bread, the dreadful water, the cockroaches, and all the—dear, dear, I ’ve no patience with him! He ought to know better than to put such notions into boys’ heads!”

By this time my mother’s eyes shone and her cheeks flushed as they seldom did; and it was quite as well for my uncle that he was absent. Her anger lasted but a moment, when she turned to me with a softer look, to say:

“ I am sorry you have got the whaling fever; but you had better talk it over with father.”

She left me and returned to her work.

At noon, after we had gathered at table, and my father's face commenced to show the effects of a filling stomach, I approached the subject uppermost in my mind abruptly:

"Father, Frank Crosby and one or two other boys have shipped with Macy Bowman to go whaling—they go next week. I have been thinking for a good while about going myself, and now I want to go with them. In fact, I have made up my mind to follow the sea. Can't I ship with Macy?"

My father glanced across the table at mother. She nodded gravely, and said quietly:

"He has not seemed well since he left school. Mebbe it will do him good to go *once*."

My father finished his meal before speaking. Then he crossed his knife and fork in front of him on his plate, wiped his mouth slowly with his napkin, pushed partly back from the table, and looked at me steadily for a moment. At last he spoke:

"I see you have made up your mind, Tom?"

"Yes, sir. I shall certainly go some time, and would like to begin now."

He remained silent another minute, during which my heart-beats were almost audible, and then decided the matter. "Well, I guess you 'll have to go then. So far as I know, there is just one cure for your disease, and that 's a voyage. It 's a miserable, dog kind of life, and before you 've been

out two days you 'll wish you were at home; but no boy ever got over the whaling fever until he had had it out."

He folded his napkin and laid it beside his plate, and, remarking that he would see Macy about it, went out.

The matter was quickly arranged. I was to ship on the *Grace Lathrop*, of Provincetown, for an eighteen-month voyage on the Atlantic, at the hundred and twentieth lay—by the term "lay" being meant that my compensation for services would be the hundred and twentieth part of whatever should be caught or secured by the vessel on the voyage.

The vessel was to start in a few days, and my mother set about making the needed preparations. A large wooden "sea-chest" was provided for me, into which she packed a great number of useful things. Among them were blue woollen shirts; white-tipped, blue home-made socks; low shoes that required no lacing and could be kicked off; an oilskin suit—coat, pantaloons, and tarpaulin—for wet weather; a cloth case of needles, pins, buttons, scissors, thimble, thread, and patches, for mending my clothes; a tin pan, iron spoon, two-tined fork, and sheath-knife to eat with; my school books, two or three magazines, and a small Bible; and, finally, a frosted fruit-cake, contributed by my aunt, Arethusa Hall. The chest was packed and

unpacked many times, each time to add some forgotten article deemed necessary by my mother; and, during all the proceedings, I stood around in the way, frenzied to exultation over the prospect of such a voyage.

At last we gathered at the railroad station, awaiting the train to take us to Provincetown. In all, there were five of us: Mr. Bowman, who was to sail as mate; William Nye, going as boat-steerer; Abraham Kenney, destined to act as cook; Frank Crosby and myself, both green hands.

I had bid my parents good-bye at the house, but a number of my boy friends went with me to the depot; and, just as we were about to board a car, one of them, David Cannon, who had taken the cure himself, whispered in my ear:

“If you want to get along easy, Tom, obey orders and move quick.”

As we whirled along toward Wareham that morning, and at intervals for long after, those words kept ringing in my ears. No advice could have been more fitting, or, luckily, have been better followed.

At dusk that evening, after a tedious ride the length of Cape Cod, with nothing in sight but sand, sand, sand, we reached our destination; and, having signed the papers of the vessel that were to evidence our contracts and make us members of the crew, all but Mr. Bowman were at once ordered on board.

The vessel, a rather small two-masted craft of the sort known as a "hermaphrodite" brig, lay anchored away from the wharves out in the harbor, not quite ready for sea. We were taken off to her in an old whale-boat by some of the town people, arriving alongside shortly after dark.

For a week my brain had been teeming with visions of whales, bananas, the sea, the whole host of things that, excluding everything real in life, go to make up the panorama of delights in the imagination of boys, and my mind was still busy with them, when some one from the deck above us suddenly asked :

" Who 's there ? "

" We 've brung some o' y'r crew, suh," answered a boatman.

A rope came dangling down into the boat, and there came the gruff command :

" Wa-al, tumble aboard here, then."

The speaker was a man of kindly instincts, one who never once upon the subsequent voyage descended to ruffianism, yet this simple order turned the current of my thoughts to the right about. I instantly understood that, with the flow of the ink from the pen on shore, my liberty had been surrendered. I was no longer in any sense my own master. Of the lowest rank on the brig, I should be subject to every whim and caprice of many

superiors, and required to obey orders and move quick, or expect trouble.

This new light upon the situation aroused an instinctive opposition that caused me to hesitate a moment after the other boys had all climbed to the deck. I continued sitting in a reverie so, until the voice of the officer above me came, a pitch higher in key:

“Come! Git a move on yeh, down there.”

This brought me back to life, and, seizing the rope, I clambered briskly up.

“’Sleep?”

“No, sir; thinking,” I replied.

“Wa-al, if I was you, guess I would n’t do much o’ that. It ’ll be bad for y’r head, mebbe,” the officer advised, not ill-naturedly.

The boatmen having secured lines around our sea-chests, we hoisted them on board, after which there was nothing for us to do but settle ourselves for the night. Nye, who ranked as an officer, went into the cabin. Mr. Brown, the second mate, who had spoken to me, retired to the quarter-deck. Kenney, Frank, and myself went at once down into the forecastle.

The forecastle, which was to be our home, was a triangular room set off in the extreme bow under the main deck, something like eighteen feet its longest way and six deep, and was reached through

a boxed gangway by means of a narrow flight of steps. On each side, fastened one above the other to the walls, and extending the whole length of the room, were two rows of bunks. The first of these was raised about a foot from the floor, and the other two feet six inches above that, leaving a like space between the upper berth and the deck above it. The bunks, the walls, the ceiling, and the floor were all unpainted, and blackened with smoke, oil, and age. Except a small sperm-oil lamp hanging upon a post at the forward end of the room, the light from which but emphasized the gloominess of the place, there was no furniture in the fore-castle.

The most noticeable thing about the den, however, and that which for the time made me oblivious of everything else there, was its odor. It is not possible for one who has never visited the fore-castle of an old whaler to imagine, nor is it at all possible for me to describe, the stench that filled our nostrils at the gangway that night. It was not new to me. I had smelled it nine or ten years before, on boarding vessels coming in from sea prior to the Civil War; but, on those occasions, the greeting of friends, the bustle of preparations by the crew for going on shore, the noise and excitement always incident to such scenes, had combined to keep this odor in the background, and it had failed to make the impression its pungency must have justified.

Now I was a tired boy seeking his bed. In the silent darkness nothing distracted my attention from the smell. It came suddenly, when my mind was alertly curious concerning our quarters, and ready to absorb the fullest measure of information about them.

As this combination of bilge-water and dead things forced itself upon my nostrils, a second revulsion of feeling suddenly overwhelmed me with a sense of degradation, and I longed for my own room at home, with its white walls, its carpeted floor, its spotless bed, but, more than all, with its pure air.

"I'll be down in a minute," I said to Frank, who was preceding me, and retreated to hide my emotions.

The cool night breeze having restored me, I went down into the place and found Frank standing in the middle of the room, his face telling tales of a weakness like my own.

"Vile!" I suggested.

"Hain't it!" he exclaimed.

Then we grasped hands and stood for a moment looking each other in the face.

"We've b'en fools, I guess; but the 's no use squealin' now we're here," he said at last.

"No; we've spilt the milk," I agreed.

And our friendship was cemented thus for the entire voyage.

We were but a few minutes getting our chests down and arranged in front of the bunks we expected to occupy. The making of the beds was a simple matter and soon done. The owners of the vessel furnished nothing but the bunks, and each of us had brought three comforters and a pillow for his bedding, which were quickly put in place, and we crawled in. We at first reserved one comforter as a cover, putting the other two in the bottom of the bunk as a mattress, but before we went to sleep we added the cover to the mattress. The den was warm enough for comfort without the cover, but the boards under us were made of oak.

The horrible smell, the rustling "clink-clink-clink" of the water outside, the stuffiness of the air, the snoring of Kenney, who fell at once to sleep, and the novelty of the situation, kept me awake for a long time; and for some hours I could hear Frank rolling and tossing in his bunk. Toward morning, I floated away into a hideous dream-land, from which I came back to find it broad day.

As I looked out of my bunk, a stream of sunlight was pouring down through the open gangway; and, having become used to the smell, the outlook seemed much more cheerful to me than it had the night before.

Kenney had long since betaken himself to his cook-house; but Frank, who lay stretching in his

bunk opposite me, returned my smile and called cheerily :

“ Hullo, Tom! ’Live ? ”

“ Yee-e-e-ah! ” I answered in a yawn.

“ How ’d y’r bed go ? ”

“ Well, ’t want feathers.”

He got on to his elbows and looked up toward the deck. “ Wonder when we have got to git up aboard here ? What time do yeh ’spect ’t is, anyhow ? ”

“ Dunno. I ’ve had enough o’ this. Let ’s get up.”

So we rolled out of the bunks to dress.

We had worn our ordinary shore clothes on coming aboard ; but now we put them away and donned the woollen shirts, pantaloons, and belt commonly worn by seamen. Then, each grinning at the odd appearance of the other, we went up on deck.

Mr. Brown was standing near the gangway, evidently expecting us.

“ Where do we wash, sir ? ” asked Frank, abruptly.

The officer’s jaw dropped, and he stood looking from one to the other of us for half a minute. Then, his mouth twitching in time with a pair of mirthful eyes, he stepped behind a square brick structure, and presently came back with a deck bucket, spliced on to a rope. “ Here ’s y’r bath,

my lad," he chuckled. "Yeh 'll find plenty o' fresh water over the side. We use shirt-sleeves, mos'ly, for towels; and, if yeh want soap,—wa-al, prob'bly yeh 've gut some yeh won't use more 'n once, that 's all."

He turned then, as if to leave us, but, on second thought, came back to us. "When yeh 've had y'r grub, take some brooms an' scrub off the deck a bit. Guess yeh may 's well turn to fust as last."

As a plunge bath, sea water is refreshing, but for toilet purposes it is a flat failure. We did the best we could with it, and went below to finish up.

We had combed our hair and adjusted our sheath-knives before Kenney called to us from the deck:

"Kid, here."

To avoid a display of ignorance as to the meaning of this announcement, I stepped up the gangway stairs to see what was wanted, when Kenney passed to me a small wooden tub containing our breakfast. "'T ain't buckwheat cakes 'n' honey, exactly," he remarked, with a leer and a tone that made it difficult for me not to hit him.

I controlled my temper and took the kid below, contenting myself with suggesting to Frank, "We'll have to punch that fellow before we get through."

"Sure. No dodgin' that," he assented. "Pete Barstow told me *they* had to, the time Kenney

sailed with him." In the meantime he had completed an examination of the contents of the tub, and continued: "No, Kenney,—not by a blamed long-short 't ain't flapjacks an' honey. Yeh told the truth that time," he commented.

We got out our pans, tin cups, and iron forks, and, placing the kid between us, sat down to our first meal on board ship.

"Le's see," said Frank, meditatively. "Here's four taters—even two apiece—skins on 'em an' never washed, nuther. No salt, ner gravy. Oh! here yeh are." He pulled something from under the hardtack in the bottom of the tub. "Here's some butter, by jinks! Say, that *is* butter, ain't it?" he asked, after sniffing at it.

"Whew! Mebbe 't *was* once," I replied, having tasted the stuff.

He raised a bit of it on the end of his sheath-knife and smelled it again. "Talk about maggoty cheese *walkin'*! Huh! that 's *nuthin'*. *This* c'n *fly!*" He laid the butter all on my side of the kid. "You 'd better eat that, Tom, so 's to git good 'n strong," he continued. "I heard y'r mother tellin' mine y'r stomach was weak an' she was goin' ter let yeh come to cure yeh—guess that 'll fix yeh out. I b'lieve I 'm pretty well, thank yeh. Take it all. Don't be bashful—y'r welcome to it."

"It's a good thing they got that kind, though,"

I added. "The old tub can't sink so long 's we've got plenty o' this aboard, yeh know."

So, like old seamen, we grumbled our way through the meal, discarding the potatoes, the butter, and the bitter black coffee, but eating with keen relish the hardtack, of which there was plenty. In the end, we were not in an unhappy mood, and, in accordance with our instructions, went merrily up to scrub the deck. We were but boys, with the feelings of boys.





CHAPTER II

ORGANIZING

IT took but a few minutes, under the supervision of Nye, to wash down the decks. He drew the water up from over the side in a bucket and swashed it along the planks, while, working with a will, we followed after him with our brooms. Then we drew up more water and rinsed off the dirt. It was novel work for us, and we rather liked to do it. When it was all done we were left at liberty to look about us until the rest of the crew came on board.

The brig was a fine little craft of about one hundred and fifty tons, newly rigged and equipped for the voyage. Except for a narrow strip of white about half-way up the side from her water-line, the hull was painted coal black. Her name stood boldly out in gilt letters under the stern-rail, and the white-robed figure of a woman lent beauty to the bow. In model she was a clipper, and, with her tall, rakish masts, she had a yacht-like look about her unusual to vessels in her class. A

topgallantsail, foretopsail, and foresail were neatly furled on the yards hanging from the foremast; a huge spanker was snugly tied up along the big boom suspended from the mainmast; and out on the bowsprit in front was a staysail, a jib, and a flying-jib. She was further provided with a number of special sails which could be rigged on in case of need, but which were to be kept out of sight in the hold on common occasions.

In the hold of the vessel, beside the necessary food supplies for such a voyage, there were stored extra ropes and canvas for repairs of the rigging and sails, and a great variety of other equipments for the business we were going upon, among which were casks, now filled with water, sufficient in size and number to hold about five hundred barrels of the oil we hoped to get. Thus laden, she sat on the water like a loaded merchantman, but, unlike the merchantman, as her real cargo would be taken on board, she would rise rather than settle under the weight.

On deck, beginning at the bow, was a windlass for hoisting anchors, casks, blubber, or anything too heavy to be lifted by hands or ordinary tackle; behind the foremast was the try works, of which more must be said later on; then came the galley, or cook-house of the cook, a small wooden affair, securely lashed to iron rings in the deck; while two

thirds of the way from the bow to the stern, came the quarter-deck, the special walking ground of the officers, raised nearly three feet above the main-deck, and mounted to on each side by wooden steps.

A stairway led down into the cabin from the main-deck, and another led from the cabin up through a gangway to the quarter-deck, a little to the left and front of the steering-gear. Over the centre of the cabin—in which the officers slept and ate—and raised several feet higher than the quarter-deck, was a glass house or skylight, and just back of that, immediately in front of the wheel, was a glass case in which was hung a compass.

The wheel was a nearly perfect piece of mechanism, by means of which a child could steer the vessel, except in the roughest kind of weather.

Suspended from slender iron davits, two on the left and one on the right hand side of the brig, were three whale-boats, each about thirty feet in length and six feet wide, the description of which will be deferred.

In every way the little vessel was well adapted and equipped for the trip to be taken.

About noon, the captain came on board with Mr. Bowman, and a little later the rest of the crew arrived.

In all, there were now twenty-three men on board:

the captain, first and second mates, three boat-steerers (harpooners), a steward, a cook, and fifteen foremast hands. We had no regular carpenter or cooper, but the officers were all capable of doing the necessary work.

All of the foremast hands were boys, and Yankees. The oldest among us was only twenty-two. One bright young fellow, who gave his name as Johnson, had run away from home to come, bringing with him nothing but the clothes he wore. Two boys from Boston represented the rougher element of Yankeedom, but proved companionable though hardly so reliable as the others. The officers, too, except a Portuguese steward, all hailed from New England. The cook and the foremast hands were quartered together in the forecabin; all the others belonged in the cabin.

It was necessary to organize this crew. This is usually done after the anchor has been weighed and the ship is under way; but we were not ready to sail, and, there being nothing else to be done while we waited, a summons was sent to us to come aft for the purpose.

The captain and both mates stood at the forward end of the quarter-deck as we obeyed and arranged ourselves facing the officers on the main-deck below.

“ We ’ll choose the watches fust, and afterwards

the boats' crews," the captain announced. "Them as b'longs to the starb'rd watch 'll stand over on *this* side, and them as is took for t'other watch 'll git on the hatch there, soon 's they 're chosen."

The mates then began choosing alternately from among us the men to be under their special commands.

To avoid collisions and insure safety and speedy passages, it is necessary to have some one always on the deck of a ship at sea. Hence, certain hours are set apart, during which this or that officer has charge of the deck. These periods are called watches—"starboard" and "larboard" (or "port")—for convenience. The men chosen for service during the periods of time constitute the members of the respective watches, and are required to be on deck and ready for work in the allotted hours.

The first watch began with us that afternoon at four o'clock and continued until six, when it was succeeded by the other watch, which ended at eight. After that, the members of each watch were alternately on duty four hours at a time until four o'clock the next afternoon, when the short "dog" watches came once more. In this manner the hours of service for each half of the crew were shifted daily, those going on duty at eight o'clock in the evening of one day, beginning at midnight on the next.

Except when engaged in the actual chase or cutting in of whales after that, these watches were maintained pretty steadily with us throughout the voyage.

The mate, having the first choice, took Frank; the second mate followed, choosing Johnson; then, much to my satisfaction, I became a member of the mate's watch. So it went, until all the foremast hands had been assigned places.

When it came to a choice of men to go in the boats, a shock was in store for me. Only the strongest and seemingly most courageous men were likely to be selected for these positions. As it is fair to suppose is the case with the dreams of most boys, up to that moment, in all my visions of whale chasing, I had myself been the central figure. The money feature of the voyage had never entered my head. I had come on this trip for no other purpose than to take part in conflicts with fighting whales; and it was my supreme ambition, at some time, to deal death-inflicting blows upon these monsters of the ocean. It had never once occurred to me that there was a possibility of my not going out in the boats. Now my heart leaped to my throat. Of all that crew I was the shortest, and, apparently, the puniest. What hope was there of my being chosen to go in a boat!

Our captain was a liberal man, and the second

mate was given the first choice, the mate the second, and the captain, who was himself to take charge of a boat, took the last.

As I had anticipated, each in turn selected the best looking piece of muscle and pluck in sight; and, as had also been foreseen by me, I found myself at the tail end. Each officer had in his turn chosen a bow oarsman, a midship oarsman, and a tub oarsman, leaving only the after oarsman to be selected from among six remaining boys.

My mind becomes hazy as it endeavors to recall the succeeding seconds. Mr. Brown selects his man—two chances left, with five candidates, myself the smallest. My heart is pumping, pumping, pumping, as I await the choice of Mr. Bowman, who, if for no other reason than friendship to my father, I think should choose me. But, in his desire to pick the best, he overlooks me and takes another. Then I brace myself, determining not to act the baby. The captain looks at me and whispers to Mr. Bowman. Mr. Bowman nods and says something quite inaudible to me. The captain looks the other boys over carefully, comes down from the quarter-deck and feels of my arms and back, returns, hesitates, and then announces:

“ I ’ll take the little feller with the specks. What ’s y’r name, ma lad ? ”

“ Tom ! ” I cry, and am in heaven.

The next thing Frank's voice sounds in my ear, and he has me by the arm walking along forward with me. "It 's all right, old feller," he says. "Gosh! but I was scart for yeh! Wisht yeh was to go in our boat, though."

The crew thus organized, the mate told us his watch would go on duty at four o'clock, and dismissed us.

The little tub shortly afterwards appeared in the forecastle, this time half full of unpeeled potatoes, some rusty salt pork, plenty of hardtack, and accompanied by a great pot of coffee. Each man got out his pan, cup, and fork, and attacked the contents of the tub on his own account, without waiting to be helped or to consider the wants of the others.

The meal finished, some one proposed a division of the bunks.

"All right," spoke up a boy we afterwards knew as Jack. "How many green hands is the'?"

There were found to be five of us—Johnson, the two Boston boys, Frank, and myself.

"Wa-al, I guess you fellers 'll have to wait 'til we git through pickin', then," said Jack.

Frank warmly protested that we were all alike and ought to be given an even show in this choice of sleeping places, but was promptly overruled by Jack.

"Dunno 'bout that. I had ter take secont ch'ice

last v'yage. Guess it must be your trick this turn," Jack declared. Then he went on to say, in a good-natured tone: "The' 's a nuther thing, boys. The' 's jest sixteen on us as must sleep down here, an' them as knows how to count 'll see the' hain't but twelve o' these here bunks, so the' 's got to be some doublin' up 'mongst us, o' somebuddy 'll have to take the floor. The' hain't none o' these bunks wide 'nough for two, an' it follers, them as doubles don't doughter be in the same watch. If we don't have to be in at the same lick we c'n git along all hunky, but it 's agin human natur for men to cord up. So jest look out fer that, when y'r choosin' mates, boys."

Jack had his way, and the "able seamen" were given first choice of berths. The right was exercised in a generous spirit by Jack, however, who at once tumbled his blankets into the poorest bunk in the den; and I finally found myself ensconced with Johnson as my mate in the best lighted and most comfortable of the upper bunks.





CHAPTER III

THE START—SEASICKNESS—BLACKFISH

WE had expected to get away on the day the crew was organized, but the chronometer of the brig, a timekeeper without which no navigator is willing to go to sea, had been sent to Boston for repairs, and for some reason its return had been delayed.

On the next day the clock arrived, and soon after the doleful “Hee-e-e-eve ho-o-o-oy, hee-e-e-eve ho-o-o-oy” that is understood to lighten labor at the windlass rang out, and in a little while the anchor was raised from its bed of mud, the yards were braced that the sails might catch the wind, and the bow of the brig turned slowly out toward the open sea.

It was a beautiful, bright June afternoon when we started, and the easy, gliding motion of the vessel upon the smooth water of the harbor was most agreeable.

Just what I was called upon to do during the

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next hour or so, my memory refuses to recall; but I know I had helped at the windlass about hoisting the anchor, and, as we started to sea, I assisted in lashing the anchor in its place on the bow. After that? I was rushing here, there, and yonder about the decks, coiling ropes, picking up rubbish, and all the time bustling in obedience to orders, feeling myself very much of a sailor.

The sails, the sky, the water, the land, all were full of new charms for me, and I was in a state more closely resembling bliss than anything since felt, until we passed out of the harbor into the open sea. Then the breeze freshened, and matters in general assumed another aspect. In place of the gentle, easy, slipping along, so soothing and enjoyable to us, the vessel now commenced tumbling and pitching about in a manner which was very disquieting to me. As we rocked upon the long sweeping waves we had come to, the brig rose and sank, and her spars swayed in a way that sickened as well as confused me. In a second, the bliss had changed to misery.

It did not so much trouble me when the vessel rose, but when she commenced settling, and went down, down, down, into the deep troughs, there came a feeling of "all goneness" and a watery condition of the mouth that alarmed me.

I knew well enough the meaning of these symptoms, and paced the deck furiously for some time,

anxiously fighting it off; but at last it became necessary for me to rush to the lee railing, and what remained of my last meal went to the fishes.

From that moment, for nearly a month, I suffered from constant seasickness. The other boys were generally affected by the disease, but within a day or two all had recovered but me. My misery continued unabated.

The entire crew, from the captain down, were most considerate and kind, and Frank and Johnson, especially, were unremitting in their attentions and care for me during the whole time. Every remedy known on board and available was in turn tried; food was brought to me from the cabin only to be rejected; blankets were spread for me in the brightest and warmest spots on the decks. It was all useless, and I was reduced to a mere skeleton, careless of living longer, when one day some one cried from aloft:

“Thar she blo-o-o-ows—thar she blo-o-o-ows!”

“Where away?” the captain shouted.

“Dead astern, sir,” came the answer.

Then the second mate announced from the main masthead:

“It ’s a school o’ blackfish, suh. ’Bout two miles off, I guess.”

“Man the boats,” next rang out.

In an instant every man was scrambling for his

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place; and, sick as I was, I commenced crawling to mine.

The captain caught sight of me, and ordered Kenney to help me along to the boat; and, with the cook's assistance, I managed to climb into it.

"Now, git in y'rself," the captain said to the cook. "Guess yeh 'll do well 'nough for blackfish." So Kenney got into the boat after me.

"All ready, suh," announced Jim, the boat-steerer.

"Lower away," said the captain quietly, and the boat dropped from its davits to the water.

It was most fortunate for me that we had sighted blackfish instead of sperm whales. The smaller animals were of less importance, and, in the hope of curing him, the captain could afford to encumber his boat with a sick boy. Had the more valuable whale been raised, some one else would have been put in my place, and, very likely, would have retained it for the balance of the voyage. Thus do little things influence and control our lives.

The change from the slow, heavy rolling of the ship, to the light, quicker swing of the boat, wrought an immediate cure. The moment the boat rested on the water, that terrible nausea was gone. I was well.

"I 'm all right, sir. Wish I had something to eat," I said to the captain.

He had no time to waste, but tossed the canvas bag of sea-biscuits to me, and, giving the water-tub a kick with his foot, left me to help myself.

“ Pull,” he commanded, and the boat shot away from the brig.

The little craft was light, strong, swift, and capable of breasting any sea off shore. Its regular crew consisted of the captain, the boat-steerer, and four foremast hands. The captain stood in the stern of the boat, steering, while the boat-steerer and foremast hands tugged at the oars. I was half lying by the tub of whale-line just behind the thwart occupied by Kenney, who was pulling my oar, and opening the bag I went at the hardtack, and found it good.

In a few minutes, the compressed lips and set jaws of the master told me we were nearing the game. His eyes, too, became fixed, and he worked the big steering-oar nervously, swinging the boat now to one side and then to the other, as the course of the animal shifted.

Raising myself in the boat to look about, less than the length of the boat from us and swimming rapidly in his efforts to escape, I saw what seemed to me to be an enormous black whale.

“ Get down, boys,” the captain urged in a whisper, although it was clear to me the brute was well aware of our presence.

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I forgot my weakened condition and sat bolt upright, keenly watching everything about us.

There were a dozen of the blackfish in sight, all of them going in a common direction; and in their midst were our boats, each one in pursuit of a single animal.

The object of greatest interest to me was the whale immediately in front of our boat; and, after the first glance at the others, my whole attention centred upon him. We were gaining upon him, but very slowly, as he rushed along ahead of us, now and then lifting his head out for a breath, and then sinking just under the surface of the water, dodging first to one side and then to the other, but closely followed at every turn by us.

It was some minutes before anything more was said, during which the men silently strained at their oars, gradually overtaking the prey. Then the captain raised his hand as a signal to Jim, and whispered,

“Stand up.”

Jim rested his oar and stood up in the bow of the boat. A harpoon lay in front of him in its crutch, ready to his hand. The fish was still going along at full speed, too far ahead to be reached by the weapon; and the men continued to tug and pull at the oars like madmen, while the captain fairly bellowed at them:

“ *Git* down there! Lay to 'em—every mother's son uv yeh—lay *down* on 'em! Git on ter y'r oars there now, 'n *pull*! ”

A few moments of frantic efforts by the men followed, during which the boat seemed to lift in leaps at every stroke of the long sweeps, until we were within ten feet of the frightened animal, when the captain bawled at Jim:

“ *Give* it to 'im!”

Jim obeyed, and sent his whale-iron straight into the back of the flying brute. Out came a wide fluke from under the bow of the boat, and down went the whale into the depths below us. Out of the tub beside me, back to the stern and around the loggerhead, thence forward and through the chock at the bow of the boat, the line buzzed and whizzed as it followed the game. Beyond doubt we were fast.

“ Nip 'im there,” called the master.

The bow oarsman applied several thicknesses of canvas to the line passing him, and succeeded in checking its outward flow sufficiently to allow of the captain getting a turn around the post by his side at the stern (the loggerhead). After that, the line ran out less rapidly, but still continued to go after the whale, slacked by the captain when the danger of the boat being dragged under water seemed imminent. In that way a steady pull was

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kept upon the whale, without suffering him to swamp us.

After several hundred yards of line had run out in this way it stopped, and a few seconds later the whale appeared again right beside the boat, rushing straight into the air fully six feet clear of the water, and falling back so near that the swash drenched every man of us.

As the big fish sank again under the water, I noticed the white face of Kenney, his eyes bulging from fear, and scrambled to the seat beside him.

“Give me my oar,” I demanded, and pushed him back into the place I had left.

The captain smiled, and ordered me to coil the line as it was drawn in by the men.

Then the line was pulled in as fast as possible until it was made taut by the fish on the other end of it; when the captain held on to it by aid of a turn around the loggerhead, and the next moment we were speeding away in tow of the whale.

We went in this manner for perhaps two minutes, when the captain passed the line he was holding to me, saying,

“Jest hang on to that 'til I tell yeh ter slack.”

So, while he leisurely filled his pipe for a smoke, I hung on to the line, and we continued to go.

After the first dive most whales remain on the surface until they are killed; but this whale proved

an exception to the rule, and presently sounded a second time.

Hearing no order to slack the line, I held on to it with all my strength, and in a second the bow of the boat was under water, while we were following the blackfish toward bottom.

To save the boat, it was only necessary to slack the line, but no one thought of giving me the order; and one of the men back of me, seeing the boat about to go down, solved the problem by slashing the line with his knife, and the whale was free.

“ Why ’n tarnation did n’t yeh slack ? ” the captain roared at me.

“ I was waiting orders, sir,” I answered stoutly.

He stared at me for a single instant, and then his face relaxed into a smile. “ That ’s one on me,” he admitted. “ Wa-al, next time you jest slack, orders o’ no orders. I ’m a givin’ yeh y’r orders right now. Yeh need n’t wait for no orders—you *slack*.” And a minute later he grumbled: “ Yeh ’d doughter known enough to ’ve slacked, anyhow.”

I had sense enough to hold my tongue, and, although the cut hurt, it was presently cured by his saying more kindly: “ ‘ Obey orders if yeh break owners ’ may be a good ’nough sayin’, and I s’pose yeh ’ve heard it; but there ’s exceptions to it, ma

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lad,—there 's exceptions to it, and *that* was one of 'em, I guess."

Two of the school had been killed by the other boats; and, by dint of some hard work at the windlass, both were hauled to the deck of the brig.

As they lay there, albeit they were the smallest species of whale aside from the porpoise that we were to see on the voyage, these animals seemed monsters to me.

In addition to their great size, there are several things about the whale tribe that attract and hold the attention of the ordinary man. Thus, they all breath air through at least one nostril opening at the top of the head, and puff it out again so mixed with water as to look like spray; their blood is warm and red; their skins are remarkably thin and smooth, and usually have an inside coating like inverted fur; deep down within their bodies are found the rudiments of legs as well as arms; and their tails (flukes), instead of standing erect in the water like those of most fishes, are carried flatwise, parallel with the surface.

However much the different species of whales may vary in other respects, in the matters enumerated they are sure to present a common likeness.

The largest of these blackfish was probably fifteen feet long, and he must have weighed more than a ton. With a head so bluntly rounded as to cause

wonder at his speed when swimming in the water; eyes set far back and down on the sides of the head, and so small as to seem useless; a hideous mouth, filled with a swollen, black tongue, and disclosing a few straggling, poorly developed teeth; a perfectly round body, about the size of a sugar barrel at the neck, thence expanding to that of a hogshead at the waist, and then tapering down until at the fluke it could be almost spanned by your fingers; a sort of hooked fin projecting along the back but with no appearance of spines; and, finally, two side paddles proportioned to the size of the body—as he lay there, his skin glossy, smooth, and shining black from end to end, the animal was clumsy in form and disgusting to look at.

But while this whale failed to please the eye, he did not fail to impress me strongly with his power. The object-lesson afforded us by the one we had lost, first in his leap from the water, and again when he started for the bottom, was calculated to confirm this impression. I had never before witnessed such an exhibition of animal force; and, although we afterwards saw whales beside which these were pigmies, I have never come to regard the blackfish as too small to be counted among the monsters of the deep.

I was permitted to go to my bunk soon after we got on board, and when I again came on deck

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nothing remained of the blackfish but their oil. That was standing in a metal tank cooling, preparatory to its being run off into casks in the hold. The two yielded us five barrels of a fairly good quality of oil.





CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST TURN AT THE MASTHEAD

THE next day I took my first turn at standing at the masthead.

Two men were kept continuously stationed as high aloft as possible, on the lookout for whales. In regular turns of two hours each, from daylight until dark, and with little regard for wind or weather, we foremast hands stood at the foremast-head, and the second mate and the boat-steerers on the other mast.

A few feet above the highest sail, two narrow bars, called cross-trees, extended about a foot on each side of the mast. From the ends of these bars two small (inch) ropes were stretched to within a few feet of the extreme top of the mast above, on each side. And it was on these cross-bars, leaning against these little ropes, that we used to be stationed, looking out upon the dreary waste of water for hours, searching for whatever could be seen,—whales, ships, land, or what not. No con-

ceivable employment could be more tedious, and it did much to perfect the cure my parents had desired.

It is customary on most whalers to build what is known as a crow's-nest for the men to stand in while thus aloft; but our captain seems to have entertained the idea that if our positions at the masthead were made less safe or enjoyable, we would be more likely to remain awake and on the lookout. At any rate, whatever may have been the reason, no crow's-nest or other device to make us comfortable was built at our mastheads, and we stood there on the narrow bars with nothing to hold by except the mast and shrouds.

As I came on deck that morning after my weeks of fasting, with my stomach at work on a full supply of food, the world had renewed its glory. The rigging, the sails, the sky, and the water were all interesting to me, a sensation which had been wanting while the seasickness held its sway.

Mr. Bowman met me at the gangway. "All right, Tom?" he asked.

"Feel like a fighting-cock, sir," I answered glibly, and thought my statement true.

"Good 'nough—good 'nough. Glad yeh feel so good. Guess yeh might 's well take y'r turn aloft then—'bout your turn, ain't it?" he said pleasantly, and passed on aft.

Just then the bell rang as the signal to relieve the man already on the lookout, and my turn had indeed come.

We had not yet reached the regular whaling grounds, and the brig was under all the sail she would carry, plunging along through a rough and high-swelling sea; and the foam-flecked waves, tossing and tumbling the vessel about like a cork, suddenly lost their fascinating interest for me, to become cold and threatening.

My strength had been by no means fully recovered; my grip upon the shrouds as I mounted the windward rail seemed all too weak for my uses, and all the buoyancy so recently felt upon reaching the deck had flown with the winds.

It seemed to me the brig had never acted so infernally as she was doing that morning, now rushing head foremost down a steep incline into a great yawning gulf, then with a sudden turn tossing her bowsprit high into the air, to immediately roll in a sickening leeward lurch and start on a second dive, while the mast I must climb swung in great swirling rings above me.

I had scarcely put my foot upon the first ratline in my ascent before my seasickness threatened to return, but I kept steadily on up until a point just below the foretop had been reached. The foretop was a platform that extended outward for several

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feet on each side of the foremast, and was the first serious obstacle in my path to the station. It was nearly half-way up to the masthead, and the ladder on which I was climbing ended several feet below it. A second, shorter, ladder was stretched from a few feet below the platform, beginning at the mast, and reaching at an angle of about forty-five degrees to the outer edge of the foretop; while from there another ladder went on up to my post.

There were two ways of surmounting the platform: one involved going out on the short ladder with my back hanging partially down; the other was by crawling through an opening in the top next to the mast, known as the "lubber-hole."

The usual and proper way was by the short ladder, but to a novice that way was seemingly too full of danger to be alluring; on the other hand, the lubber-hole was the resort of landlubbers, a place into which no true sailor could be enticed.

To me the situation presented only a choice of bad ways. To pass through the lubber-hole meant a subsequent endurance of the jeers of the boys whom I believed to be watching me from the deck; while to take the other way was to incur the risk of my strength proving unequal to the task. The mast was now swaying and jerking in a most alarming manner, and my arms and legs were trembling from the effects of the recent illness. It was

doubtful if it were within my power to go over the top in the usual way.

I waited there a few seconds to allow my nausea to subside and to recover my breath, and then, as the brig lurched well to leeward, resolved not to show the white feather let what might happen. I shut my teeth hard and dashed ahead, to find myself a moment later safe above the platform.

The unexpected ease with which the apparent difficulty had been overcome restored my courage, and, without stopping to look or to breathe, I hurried on up to the cross-trees.

I was now perhaps sixty feet above the deck, my feet upon ratlines of a ladder that was barely wide enough to let my toes between the shrouds, my arms resting over the little cross-bars, while my hands clutched the ropes on the other side of the mast. With my strength apparently exhausted, my heart throbbing in my throat, my breath caught in smothering gasps, and my whole frame quivering with anxious terror, I expected to be hurled from that swinging mast into the sea at any moment. The situation might well have tried the nerves of a boy in perfect health who had never before mounted to the masthead; for me, it was the extreme verge of my powers to bear.

At that juncture the idea came to me that I was in a nightmare, and I let go with one hand to pinch

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myself awake. This act relieved the nervous strain under which my mind was suffering, and caused me to laugh outright. In an instant after that my heart had resumed its proper place, my breathing had become again easy and regular, and the next moment I was standing on the cross-bars.

Still, I was far from comfortable. I was in deadly fear of a recurrence of my seasickness, while I was in such a state of exhaustion that it was necessary to use all my remaining strength to retain an upright position.

If there had been a hundred whales in sight, they would not have been "raised" by me, for my mind was wholly engrossed in holding on and seeming unconscious of peril. Indeed, my principal concern was lest some one should discover my fright, and my assumption of carelessness must have entertained Jim, who stood on the other mast watching me.

The hours had dragged their way into weeks, seemingly, before Frank called to me from the foretop:

"Hy there, Tom!"

I look down at him, and he resumed:

"Y'r time 's up. Come down."

In a few seconds I was with him at the top.

"Liked it, did n't yeh? Yeh 've stayed five minutes over time," he informed me.

“ Guess the wind must have drowned the bell,” I suggested.

“ He, he, he, Tom! Yeh ’ll git so ’t yeh c’n hear that bell in a hurricane. If yeh don’t hear it, yeh ’ll see it waggle, anyhow. How *did* yeh like it up there, though? Scare yeh any?” he asked.

“ Did I show any signs?”—cautiously.

His eyes glittered, but he kept his face straight as he replied: “ No, no. Not a bit. But, honest Injun, now, warn’t yeh scart *some*?”

We were many feet above the deck, and standing in a gale of wind, yet the confession was whispered in his ear:

“ No name for it. *Scared!* There ’s no word in the English language to half express it. I nigh about shook off my clothes, that ’s the truth.”

“ Wa-al, yeh done a heap better ’n I done. I crawled through that durned lubber-hole, an’ felt like a blamed sucker for doin’ it. But ’t won’t do to talk much here. So long. It ’ll be all hooky after this.”

And it was.





CHAPTER V

WE COMPLAIN TO THE MASTER AND KENNEY COMES TO GRIEF

THE meals served to us in the fore-castle now were neither illustrations of high art in cookery nor of extravagant plenty. Anything beyond the daily rations of salt meat and potatoes was valued as a luxury and prized accordingly. A kind of boiled bread, with molasses for sauce, was sent to us once in two weeks; a piece of pie for each man found its way to us about as often; gingerbread was given us several times; biscuits baked by the cook or steward came occasionally; dried pea or bean soup, never both, was served weekly, with something like regularity for some months; and, finally, cornmeal mush (hasty pudding) was among the extras fed to us. Now and then, too, a fish or porpoise would be caught, and part of it sent forward to us.

That was all. Month followed month during the whole voyage, with no other variation from the

inevitable potatoes, salt meat, hardtack, and coffee than what has just been mentioned.

If all these things had been well cooked, we should not have been in danger from gout, but they were frequently utterly spoiled in the cooking by Kenney. In this way he even spoiled our hasty pudding, or, rather, by failing to cook it at all.

To make mush, it is only necessary to stir meal little by little into boiling water until the mess has reached the proper consistency, then add a little salt, and it is done. But for Kenney, who was perhaps the laziest cook ever permitted to tantalize a crew, even so simple a process was too irksome.

One day, something like two weeks after my trip to the masthead, the kid came down to us with some mush that had been made by stirring meal into *cold* water. Once or twice before it had reached us half done, and the boys had used it for cleaning their pans, letting the matter pass without anything worse than a little grumbling; but this last mess was too much for the patience of Jack, who declared with great energy, not unmixed with oaths:

“ The ol’ *man*’s got to know ’bout this.”

“ That ’s right; somebuddy doughter to tell ’im,” chimed in another.

“ Ye-ah, an’ git kerflummoxt all ove the deck fer ’is pains,” cautioned a third.

Jack turned to me. " Say, Tom, you 'd stan' the best show o' gittin' heard and doin' us fair aft. The ol' man 's kinder stuck on you sence yeh hung onter that line so durned hard—putty nigh yanked 'im inter kingdom come, an' made 'im respect yeh, I guess. Anyhow, you c'n put things softer 'n most of us can. S'pose you tell 'im 'bout this thing. What yeh say ? "

I had small taste for the errand, but, believing in the sense of justice of the captain, and probably flattered by Jack's politic words, I undertook it.

" Guess yeh 'd best take y'r pan an' spoon 'long, sost he c'n see," Frank suggested as I was starting.

So, armed with the mush, pan, and spoon, I went aft to seek the master.

The captain was pacing his usual beat, back and forth along the quarter-deck, and I boldly mounted the deck to confront him. He was apparently absorbed in his own thoughts, and took no notice of me.

" Ahem! " I began.

Still he walked on, paying me no attention.

" *Ahem!* "—louder this time, but with no better success.

Then I placed myself squarely in his path and spoke out. " The boys forrard have sent me to you, sir, to show you what sort of stuff the cook is giving us. We 've—they 've stood it a long while,

without saying anything about it, in hopes that he would do better; but, instead of doing better, he is getting worse and worse."

"Wha — wha — what 's *that*! The boys sent yeh, did yeh say?" he asked sharply, his face coloring slightly.

"Yes, sir."

He walked rapidly across the deck away from me, and then turned with a menacing gesture, his eyes ablaze with anger. "That 's allers the way with sech fellers as *you*. Yeh never had a square meal afore yeh come aboard here, *none* on yeh. Yeh don't none on yeh know what a square meal *is*—not a single mother's son uv yeh all. No, suh. The minute yeh git aboard a ship, the' hain't nuthin' good 'nough for yeh. Here we 've got the best grub outfit ever put on a whaler, and you fellers come here kickin' jest the same." His voice had gradually increased in volume until he was fairly screeching. "I bet *you* never got no sech mush 's that to home, nuther, yeh little — — — — —."

The blood of the men of '76 was boiling within me by this time, and I interrupted him hotly. "No, sir. I never *did*. *That* 's not mush; that 's *chicken* feed," I snapped contemptuously. "If you 'll taste it, you 'll *see*."

The captain was glaring at me, and it was easy

to see the thought of kicking me off the quarter-deck was in his mind; but, as the boys afterwards said, I was "hopping mad" and stood my ground, extending my pan and spoon toward him.

"Darn it—*here!*" He snatched the pan from my hand. "That's jest sich mush's we git in the cabin," he snarled, "and anybuddy that'll grumble at it doughter be *flogged.*"

His judgment thus delivered, to prove his faith in the announcement made, he filled my spoon to its limit and crammed it into his mouth.

"Ugh—wah! Foo—few—foo—*wuh!* FUGH—FOO—WAH—WOO!" The mush was spurting over the deck and my pan flew out over the sea.

A moment later Kenney was fleeing from his galley, closely followed by the captain, who played upon him at every jump with a rope's end. Around and around the deck, and bellowing like a frightened calf, ran our cook, with his furious master at his heels, while the rope swished and slashed about the thin-clad back.

At last, breathless and exhausted, his face the color of a boiled lobster, the captain stopped to pant:

"By gum—ef that stuff 's—good 'nough—good 'nough fur *them*—it 's plenty — plenty good 'nough fur *you*—you — — — —. Now you git—you git that kid—an' ef you hain't et—the hull

durned mess in an hour—blamed ef I don't—pitch y'r dummed carcase overboard!"

Then he seated himself on the steps leading to the quarter-deck to witness the execution of his sentence; while we stood, for the next half hour, gibing our victim, as he vainly strove to fulfil the condition of his fate. At last, tired of waiting, the captain cuffed the fellow's ears soundly, ordered the rest of the mush thrown over the side, and resumed his beat at the stern.

The moral effect of this episode upon Kenney was such that we had after that no just cause for complaint against him. The cooking was by no means excellent, but he did his best to please us.





"WITH HIS FURIOUS MASTER AT HIS HEELS."



CHAPTER VI

PORPOISES—HOMESICKNESS—DRUDGERY

SAVE now and then a flying-fish dropping on the deck, or a school of porpoises playing about the vessel, for weeks after we entered our protest against raw mush there was almost nothing to break the trying monotony of our lives.

The porpoise is the smallest as well as most sportful of the whale tribe. Often, and especially if the brig were plowing her way at fullest speed, these animals would come together in groups at the bow, where they would gambol and dart about for a long time.

The flesh of the porpoise resembles that of hog liver in color, and its taste was not much relished by us. A small quantity of oil that is greatly esteemed by clockmakers is made from the head (porpoise-jaw oil), but otherwise they are of little value, and not uncommonly we left them unmolested at their play.

They were usually from six to eight feet in

length, round, smooth, glossy, and shining, something like a foot through their bodies—graceful creatures, with the apparent innocence of lambs.

Occasionally one of them would show up with a white-tipped side paddle, or some other peculiar mark on his body, when he was apt to become the prey of some curious boy who desired a closer inspection. In such cases, the boy would get out upon the chains over the bow with a harpoon and line, and, watching his chance, soon impale his unsuspecting victim with the weapon. Then the poor animal would be hauled on board, his head severed from his body, some slices of his meat cut off for our meals, and the rest of him thrown back into the sea.

Although it has often been stated that the porpoise is a cannibal and will eat his brother when thus cast overboard, I do not remember ever seeing one of them attack such a carcase; but, on the contrary, the instant one of a school was struck by us, the rest of them dived and were gone from sight in a flash, not to be seen again by us.

On small sailing vessels such as the brig there is little to employ twenty-three men other than what may be termed made work; and nothing more annoys an ordinary Yankee boy than that sort of "pounding stone." He will endure the severest toil as cheerfully as any other mortal so long as it seems

to him necessary; but set him at something for no better purpose than to save him from idleness, and he commences to shirk and growl.

The officers did their best now to keep us busy, but the days and even the hours lagged wearily enough, while we all grumbled at our want of luck. In the daytime we were kept at the masthead, at the wheel, scrubbing the decks and paintwork, scouring brass, mending sails and rigging, splicing ropes, picking oakum, cleaning up the boats, turning the grindstone to sharpen lances, spades, and harpoons, tarring shrouds—at every conceivable thing that could be done on a vessel. At night, when not asleep, we stood our turns at the wheel and the forward lookout, dreamily watching the compass two hours at a time at the one post, and pacing the deck at the other.

We had seen nothing of the fighting whales we had dreamed of seeing; had met with nothing like an adventure—it was all different from the pictures of a life at sea drawn for us on shore, and all decidedly disagreeable to me.

In place of the whales, fruits, and foreign lands that had filled my brain while preparing for the voyage, visions of home now haunted my mind. I could see rising before me the trees, the flowers, the gardens, the birds, the streets, the houses, the faces, the girls and the boys, all the familiar things

of the old town. Asleep or awake, not for a single moment was I rid of these tormenting memories for days together. As we would sit down before our filthy kid, with its unpeeled and unwashed potatoes, its ill-smelling pork and rancid butter, its tough, maggot-tainted hardtack, its black, bitter coffee, in the stuffy den where we both ate and slept, a clean white spread table would appear before my eyes, with its orderly, shining white dishes, its knives and forks, its napkins and rings, its New England boiled dinner, with cabbage and turnips and fine corned beef, its fluffy white bread, its sweet, fresh butter, its glasses of water or creamy milk, its everything that was lacking in our fore-castle to make eating enjoyable, and then would come the sound of my father's voice raised in reverent invocation of the Creator's blessing upon the meal. It was terribly real and tantalizing to me. My tin pan and iron spoon, with all the ill-assorted conglomeration of messes about me, would be thrust aside for some other time, and I would hurry on deck to get rid of myself.

I had been tortured by seasickness until I had longed for death; and now my sufferings were even more acute from homesickness.

Luckily, the officers of the brig were not disposed to be tyrannical. In this respect they differed much from the officers of many vessels. They

kept us employed as much as possible, but it was upon the theory that men were best contented when busy, and no man who was not physically able was forced to work. There was a sense of good-fellowship among us all, from the captain down to the greenest foremast hand, such as rarely is found to exist on board ships. But for this happy circumstance, during the period of which I am writing and for much of the time later, the life would have been unbearable for me.

The language of both officers and men was frequently brutal and coarse; but, in reality, the words had little more significance than the "Good morning" or "How do you do?" of shore life. The average landsman would be ready to fight at once if addressed as a "son of a gun," or by any of the dozen more disgusting titles that passed freely among us; but to the common sailor such addresses are tokens of affection or signals for warfare, according to the tone or manner of the utterance.

In consequence of this custom among seamen of using words that are disagreeable to refined ears, although somewhat at the expense of fidelity to my story, the conversations and exclamations of the men will not be always rendered verbatim as they are recalled to mind. To give the real words used on all occasions would be an unwarrantable libel upon the characters of our crew—the men were all

vastly better at heart than the language employed by them.

Of all the drudgery we had to perform, tarring the rigging was to me the most annoying. Rope, when exposed to all kinds of weather, will soon become unfit for use unless kept well covered with something. And, for that reason, every stationary shroud and rope about the brig was kept smeared well with tar; and, as we had none of the modern iron rigging, there was a great deal of tarring necessary to be done.

A man, armed with a tar bucket and wad of oakum, would be hoisted in a sling to the highest point on a stay or shroud; and then, slowly letting himself down, daub the surface of the rope from there to the deck or lower fastening. By the time he was through with his work, his hair, his clothes, his hands, every part of him would be black with the sticky stuff. It found its way beneath his finger-nails, into every wrinkle and crease of his palms, through his clothes to his body; and wherever it found its way there it stayed until fairly worn off, for the soap and brine with which we were compelled to clean ourselves was wholly useless against it. The work was fatal to all notion of being neat, and was thoroughly disliked by most of us.

I owed my release from a good deal of that kind

of work to following the advice given me by my friend Cannon that morning at the depot. The mate would bawl:

“ Tar bucket here! ”

And, before the sound of his voice had ceased to ring over the decks, I would appear to him with a bucket of tar, ready for the work. I obeyed orders and moved quickly on all occasions in those days. After this had happened several times, Mr. Bowman took notice of it in a manner that was characteristic of him. I had just come down from standing my turn at the masthead one day, when I heard the mate calling for tar. Seeing no one going in response to the summons, I caught up a bucket and hastened along to obey it. At sight of me the mate dropped the rope he was examining, and roared at me:

“ Here, you let that alone! ”

I was somewhat startled, and, thinking there had been some mistake, began an apology.

He paid no heed to what I was trying to say, but seemed to be looking past me at some one forward. Turning, I saw a tuft of reddish hair waving in the wind above the try-pots, and concluded that one of the boys was skulking there.

“ You, *Reddy* ! ” bellowed Mr. Bowman.

A freckled-faced boy came slowly out from behind the brickwork and moved reluctantly my way.

“ You ’re the feller I ’m after. Git y’r lazy bones along out o’ that lively, now ! ”

Then, after the boy had got to us and sheepishly taken the bucket from my hands, the mate turned upon me as though I, and not Reddy, was the culprit.

“ You hain’t the only man aboard that knows how to spread tar; don’t yeh b’lieve it. More ’n that, when I call for *tar*, I don’t mean *you*, nuther. D’ yeh hear ?—*you* hain’t tar, and more ’n that, you jest keep y’r hands outer tar ’til I tell yeh to put ’em in—do yeh understand ? Now mind. This feller—this red-headed son of a sea-cook ”—(here the mate suddenly shook the boy until his teeth clattered in his head)—“ *he’s* tar for me—he is, and I want you to remember that too. It’s time *he* learned what slush is.”

For a long time after that, poor Reddy, who owed his nickname to his complexion, spent the most of his time acquiring the art of putting on tar; while it was months before I was even allowed to touch that kind of work.

So it was with other disagreeable jobs. The officers soon came to know who were disposed to shirk, and gave those men reasons for wishing they had been more prompt to obey. I am sure I escaped many irksome bits of drudgery by moving quickly without regard to the sort of duty required of me.



CHAPTER VII

KILLERS

WE had been cruising probably two months, with no break in the monotony mentioned in the last chapter, and the officers as well as the foremast hands were becoming disheartened and irritable, when, screeched with all the force of Frank's lungs, the cry for which we were constantly listening, came down from aloft:

"*There she breach-es,*" followed at once by, "*There she blo-o-ows!*"

In a second every man of the crew was on his feet, with his eyes and ears alert.

"Where away?" demanded the captain.

"Right aport, suh."

From my post at the wheel nothing could be seen of the whales. They were too far away to be seen from the deck.

The mate hurried with a spy-glass into the main rigging, while the captain walked nervously back

and forth on his usual beat. Every other man who could sought some good point of outlook.

As they saw more and more of the whales, Frank and Mr. Brown at the mastheads continued to cry, in rather subdued tones: "Blo-o-ows—blo-o-ows—thar she blo-o-ows!"

A moment after the mate had adjusted his glass, the captain asked of him impatiently,

"What do yeh make 'em?"

The captain's nervousness manifestly increased as he waited the deliberate answer of Mr. Bowman, which was not given for fully a minute:

"They 're killers, sir. Suthin' of a school—a dozen, mebbe."

"How far do yeh make 'em?"

"'Bout five milds."

"We 'll run down that way a bit, then," the captain directed.

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the mate, and immediately bawled:

"Man the braces."

The order was repeated by Nye on the deck, and the men hustled to their places.

"All ready, sir," was presently announced.

"Let 'er off, Tom," said the captain to me.

I whirled the wheel, and the bow fell off in the direction of the whales, the spanker-boom and yardarms keeping pace with it.

“ There—steady. That ’ll do. Keep ’er so,” the captain ordered.

“ Steady, sir. Keep ’er so, sir,” I answered, and whirled the wheel back.

“ Well—well—well, that—*belay* all,” next came, as each sail was finally trimmed for the new course.

The breeze was light and our speed correspondingly slow. It seemed an hour before anything could be discerned from the deck to account for such a stirring. Then a dark, shining object glimmered for a moment on the horizon and sank. A minute later several such objects were shimmering in the sunlight, and little puffs like steam rose from them and faded.

“ There she blo-o-ows!” rang out in concert from a dozen throats at once on the decks.

After that we sailed on for another hour, the whales gradually showing larger and plainer, and the little puffs going higher and remaining longer in sight, before the foreyards were hauled aback and the brig came to a standstill.

“ Man the boats!” bawled the captain.

With the precision that comes from a practised system, all three boats dropped on the water, and we were off for the killers.

There was always, during the whole voyage, a good deal of rivalry between the crews of our boats. Aside from the natural sportiveness of the Yankee

boy, each crew was desperately anxious to make the best possible record for itself as a whale catcher, and bent all its energies to be first upon the ground. With us, there was no holding back by the second mate to make way for the captain. So far as concerned its right to get to the game, each boat was a free-lance with us; and now had commenced a spirited race.

The distance to the whales was scarcely a mile, a short run for well-manned whale boats; and, although some of us had had little experience at the oars, we made the boats leap as they went.

The whales were scattered here and there over a wide expanse, sporting about in the water with no thought of being attacked; and before they were in the least aware of our presence we dashed in among them.

With muscles and nerves strung to the highest tension we were tugging at our oars in our boat, when, a little to one side and behind us, an enormous blue-black fin shot at least five feet out of the water, followed by a broad round body of the same color large enough to carry such an appendage. A low, puffing sound reached my ears, a jet looking like steam welled out from the top of the animal's head, and then both fin and body settled back out of sight.

"There 's one right behind us, sir!" I gasped.

"Stern—stern all!" shouted the captain; and

then, as our oars sank deep to check the progress of the boat, he said to the boat-steerer :

“ Stand up, Jim.”

As Jim rose in his place and caught up his harpoon, the killer broke the surface again, less than ten feet ahead of us; and, without waiting for orders, the boat-steerer hurled his iron straight into the round back behind the great fin.

I was sitting with my back to the animal, but a great swashing of water behind me told the story plainly enough, even before the line started on its whizzing course out of the boat. We were fast and the killer was making time. He had not sounded, as most whales do when struck, but was making off on the surface of the waves.

“ In with y’r oars, boys! ” the captain screeched excitedly; and then, when the oars had all been placed out of danger of “ crabbing,” he spoke more quietly to the bow oarsman :

“ Nip that line afore he gits the hull of it.”

The boy fumbled for a few seconds with his nippers, but, after the first tub had been nearly emptied of its cord, managed to grip the line sufficiently to enable the captain to secure a second turn around the loggerhead, by means of which it could be held. We then all turned with faces toward the flying beast and clung to the line that held him to us.

As the whale now went, his fin and back rolling in and out of the water far in advance of us in a succession of rocking leaps, the gait was terrific. The spray dashed high in air on each side and back of the boat. The bow of the boat rose seemingly above the spray, while its stern sank until we were in a tunnel of water. From where I sat on the after thwart nothing could be seen but dazzling streaks of shining foam and sea, that gurgled, spluttered, and hissed as we flew past it. We had no means or thought of measuring the speed of the animal, but it was quite as great as was safe for our boat. Indeed, a recent writer declares that the killer is so swift and of such small value that he enjoys immunity from attack by whalers; and, although my experience does not support the statement as to the privilege or lack of value of the animal, I am ready to endorse it concerning its powers of flight.

Soon after we were fairly under way the captain gave me the line to hold while he changed ends in the boat with the boat-steerer, for the purpose of killing the game. I held on to it until relieved by Jim, and was then allowed to turn once more and look ahead.

Just as I was turning, another of those great fins rose, this time so close beside us that we could have leaped from the boat to the killer's back. Instantly came the roar of our whale gun, and a loaded bomb

had sunk into the vitals of the beast, sent there by the captain.

We never knew with certainty whether that whale had designed an attack upon our boat. The captain evidently was of opinion that something must be done, however, for he seldom resorted to his gun except in emergencies, as we learned later.

The animal settled away under the water, and we saw nothing more of him until we found him dead, some hours afterwards, floating on the water.

It was becoming lively work with us now, and our excitement ran high; but no one of my companions showed the least sign of fear. Without exception we were all hilariously happy. For my own part, there was no sense of danger, but every faculty was alert.

No other whales appearing in our immediate vicinity, after a few minutes we began to pull up by the line upon the running killer. This we found to be no light task. To gain an inch, it was necessary to pull a little harder than would be required to maintain the speed at which the boat was then going, and the strain upon the line was already very great. Aided now and then by the captain, three men tugged at the line, while Jim took in and held the slack at the loggerhead. My own duty was to take care of the line as it was drawn in and coil it neatly in the boat.

In this manner we drew slowly up to the fleeing brute, until we had come near enough to him, and were ordered to:

“ Hold ’er now.”

The captain had laid his gun aside in the bow and stood ready with his long hand-lance. We were so close to the whale now that the bow of the boat was pulled down from its skyward tip, and, as we sat facing forward we could see him plainly.

Up came the fin, scarcely fifteen feet ahead of the boat, and a portion of the back below it stood exposed above the water. I looked for the lance to be thrown then, but, in the better judgment of the master, the time had not come. Again and again and again that high fin rose in front of us, with no movement from the captain watching his chance at the bow. Then the animal sheered suddenly and sharply to one side and dashed ahead in a mighty leap. A streak of pearly white showed itself upon the side of the animal; and, before the boat had turned to follow the beast, the lance was driven in behind his side paddle.

Quick as a flash the animal turned and dove beneath the boat.

“ Swing ’er!” screamed the captain.

Jim needed no such command. Already, with a promptness excelled only by that of our killer, he had swung the boat and saved us from an ugly



"WE BEGAN TO PULL UP BY THE LINE UPON THE RUNNING KILLER."

somersault by the time the monster emerged from the water behind us to speed away on the return track.

The creature was now struggling more desperately than ever to free himself from us, and with every jump exposed a side to the thrusts of the captain's lance. Thrice more the weapon entered the vitals of the whale, and then a stream of blood spouted from the nostril on the top of his head.

"Slack—*slack*. *Stern* all!" yelled the captain.

Jim let the line out around the loggerhead while I attended to straightening the kinks in it, and the other boys got their oars out and did their best to stop the headway of the boat.

When I was again able to look for him, the whale had disappeared under the water; but a few seconds later he suddenly leaped above the surface with his whole form, and went flapping about in his death throes. Ten seconds after that the animal subsided and was at peace.

As the side flipper of the dead whale rolled to the surface, the brig could be seen some miles to leeward, doing her best to come up to us. The other boats were at short distances from us, their crews resting upon the oars. An hour later the vessel hove to close by, and we gathered the dead killers together at her side.

Six of the animals had fallen victims to our attack

in spite of all immunity enjoyed by them, and were now safely moored to the brig. The mate had killed three of them with his hand-lance; the second mate had killed one with his lance, and wasted a bomb upon another that we did not find; while we had scored two, both of which we had secured.

It was dark before the last of the whales was finally picked up and tied to the brig; and then we were permitted to go below for a rest preparatory to the work that was to come.

If whaling were made up wholly of the pursuit and killing of the game, by persons adapted by nature for it, the life would be indescribably agreeable. In the midst of a school of these monsters men experience a peculiarly exhilarating excitement, an intoxication of bewildering delight to be found nowhere else. But the chases constitute an inconsiderable part of such voyages, and are often preceded by months of idleness, to be followed by days of tremendous toil. Often, after lying about for weeks with none but the lightest work to be done, until their muscles have become relaxed and soft as those of a baby, the men are suddenly called upon for herculean feats in the chase to be supplemented by unremitting, continuous labor for weeks.

The pursuit of whales usually taxed our powers to the utmost; the work after a successful chase never failed to exhaust them.

We had now a week of this hard work before us. These were not blackfish, but substantial whales. They were by no means so large or so valuable as other whales we were to come upon; but they were too large and too many to be taken in on our decks, as had been done with the smaller whales, and they were worth too much to allow of being cut adrift. If we had killed only one or two of these killers, not improbably we might have hoisted them on board, although it would have been a hard tug for us; but there was no talk of taking six of them to the decks.

The next morning our killers all lay alongside, the most graceful in outline and beautiful in coloring of any whales we were to see. There was nothing either ungainly or disgusting about their looks. The head, comparatively small and rounded, was well adapted for cutting its way through the water, thus accounting to some degree for the wonderful flights of the animal.

The back of each of them was surmounted by a triangular fin that commenced just back of the head, and, rising in a graceful backward sweep to a height of five or six feet, ended in an almost sharp point. It was of the same bluish color as the back, and, when the animal swam in life, stood either quite erect, or was a little lopped to one side near its end.

The mouth, however, held the greatest fascina-

tion for me. A more powerful or more complete cutting machine could hardly be contrived of flesh and bone. The partially opened jaws disclosed rows of strong, conical, ivory teeth on both the upper and lower jaws, so distributed that when the mouth was shut the upper teeth fitted precisely between the lower set, making the most formidable armament provided by nature for any living animal; while from the corner of the mouth to the free ends of the jaws was a length sufficient to afford extension for grasping one of our boats. It was lucky, that their owners did not choose to employ them in that way against us.

The smallest of the whales was probably eighteen feet in length, and the largest of them may have been six feet longer. We took no measurements of them, and I am obliged to estimate their size from memory of their appearance. Just back of the head the bodies were something like three feet in diameter, gradually swelling out toward the middle to four or five feet, and thence tapering on fine, curving lines down to a few inches where they joined the tails. The flukes must have measured about four feet from tip to tip, and were of the usual form. The backs and upper portions of the sides of the animals were smooth, glossy, and blue-black in color, the under parts being pearly white. There was no blending of the colors, but each was

sharply defined, and arranged in artistic, symmetrical patterns over the bodies.

All in all, a more elegant or a more terrible monster than the killer to look upon did not come under our observation during the voyage.





CHAPTER VIII

GRUMBLING—HABITS OF KILLERS—CUTTING

THE tick-tack, tick-tack, tick-tack of Time goes unceasingly on, forever and forever. Not so with the thoughts of man. Of all earthly things, they alone are uncontrolled by relentless law; and it remains my privilege to turn back the hours of my story and begin at a time overleaped.

The night before, weary and cross, the boys had thrown themselves into their berths, muttering:

“Mighty tough.”

“Wisht the brutes had sunk before ever we run acrost ’em!”

And at daylight the next morning, when we rolled out in response to the summons resounding in the gangway, the grumbling was renewed:

“S’pose the’ ’ll work the life outen us now.”

“Ye-ah, an’ I ’m that blamed sore I can’t move ’thout scringin’.”

Each in turn yawned, rubbed his eyes, fumbled sleepily for his clothes, in the meanwhile giving

voice to uncomplimentary sentiments concerning the whaling business, the officers, and themselves, until another side was shown them by Jim, who shouted down to us:

“ Say, boys, the ol’ man ’s ordered the steward ter make yeh some hot biscuits an’ coffee afore yeh turn to. How ’s that ? ”

No transformation could be more complete than was instantly worked by that speech.

Every boy began bustling about preparing for the coming banquet. Pans, cups, forks, spoons, under-went rubbings from shirt-sleeves or oakum, in accordance with the habits of the individuals, and tongues that were before mum commenced wagging.

“ Say, fellers, what jeh think o’ killers, anyway—the’ look sort o’ uppish, don’t the’ ? ” inquired Frank cheerily.

“ Never knowed the’ was no killers afore,” Reddy acknowledged without shame.

“ I nuther,” Frank admitted. “ Where ’s Jack ? Mebbe he c’n tell us suthin’ about ’em.”

“ He ’s on deck,” spoke up Johnson. “ Brown can’t do a thing without *him*. Whenever he wants to sneeze, he grabs hold of his nose and sings out, ‘ Je-je-ja-*jack* ! ’ to beat the Dutch ! ” Then, as the laugh following this sally moderated, the boy went on :

“ But, say, Brown told us a lot about killers while

we were waiting for the brig to come down to us yesterday. He says them fellers live off of other whales and every other blessed thing they can catch in the sea. When they 're hungry—which is just always—they 'll tackle any old thing the' come acrost—sperm whales, or anything else that happens to be laying 'round. He told us he saw a dozen of 'em once pitching on to an old bowhead up in the Arctic, and they just tore the tongue out of his mouth before they left him. They got the bowhead afterwards—Brown did—and the' found the killers had just snaked that tongue clean out by the roots."

"That 's what them teeth 's made for," Frank suggested.

Making no answer, Johnson went on:

"He saw a lot more of 'em at a sperm whale once, too. They were simply drowning him. Yeh know a whale breathes air the same as we do, and you can drown one of 'em just like you would smother one of us. He said one of those killers would jump square atop of the whale and grab hold of him right over the spout hole, and then hang there like an old bulldog. The whale would lift his head blame near fifty feet out of the water, with that killer clinging to him like a leech; and then he 'd prance and flounce 'round in that shape for half a minute before the dummed killer would let go, and, when the' thing finally would drop, the

whale would slump back all in a heap, limber as such an old stick can be. Then, in another second, up would come another killer at the same old game, and there 'd be another tussle like the first one, until they just simply drowned that sperm bull right there."

"I knowed by the look uv 'em the' could fight," put in Reddy, "but I did n't s'pose the' was nothin' as could lick a big sperm whale."

"He did n't say *one* could. Yeh see, they got a lot of 'em 'round 'im all at once, and did n't give him a bit o' show to hit 'em," explained Johnson.

"The biggest yarn he told us, though, was about a lot of killers taking a whale away from a ship's boats. He said they got a right whale flipper up somewhere, when all to wunst up bobs a school of these fellers right beside their whale, and went to eating him up before their very eyes. They had four boats—they were in a full-rigged ship that time—and all hands let into those killers with lances, spades, oars, and every blessed thing they could lay holt of, trying to drive the critters away. But 't wa'n't any use. The killers were hungry, and the' stayed right with it, and just ripped and tore 'round about their bird's-egging as if there wa'n't a boat in a thousand miles of 'em. After a while the blamed whale sunk, and all the boys had left was four killers floating around there dead."

“ I wonder they had n’t gone for the boats,” said Frànk. “ Why did n’t the’, d’ yeh s’pose? If I ’d be’n them, I ’d a done it, sure.”

“ Oh, I dunno! Mebbe there was n’t anything in it. I guess it ’s pretty hard to tell just where the truth ends and fiction sets in with an old whaler after he starts to tell what he ’s seen. The whole plaguey business sounded to me like a lot o’ yarns, but I dunno,” responded Johnson.

“ Here yeh be. Coffee an’ biscuits, allee samee fust-classee hotellee,” Nye announced from the deck, and our talk ended.

Biscuits and coffee fresh from the hands of the cabin steward were very different from biscuits and coffee furnished by the cook, and they now commanded our exclusive attention. The bread was light and sweet, the drink hot, and, to us, delicious. The pork, potatoes, and hardtack, though they accompanied the feast, went begging.

“ Hey, what! This ’s more *like*. Hoo-o-om yum, but these are good, boys,” Johnson declared.

“ Here, somebuddy call Nye back!” shrieked another boy. “ The’ ’s suthin’ alfred wrong. Jerusalem! we can’t never stand no sich—*we* don’t want no weak butter, not at this end o’ the ship.”

“ Hush up, sonny. The ol’ man ’s been a churnin’. Can’t yeh let ’im have his way once in a while, yeh goose!”

So it went until the meal was finished, our spirits rising as the biscuits went down; and, after that, light-hearted and merry, without waiting to be called, we flocked to the deck and our duty.

As we came out of the forecastle gangway, the brig was lying to under short sail. The air was soft and cool, reminding me so much of a spring morning at home that I seemed to hear the chirping of a robin. But no birds, or songs, or spring flowers were there; nothing broke the silence of the ocean calm but the occasional splash of a shark in the water and the bustle of preparations for the work to begin.

I stepped to the railing and looked over at the killers. All of them were there, but not now alone. The water was alive with scavengers, ready to perform the part in life assigned to them.

It has remained a mystery to me where these sharks came from that day. Up to that moment, I think, we had not seen a shark; yet here they were swarming all about us. The same thing occurred on similar occasions after that. In a little while, not seldom before the dead whale was alongside, the hooked fins of these wolves would be seen rising three or four inches above the surface of the water, and coming by hundreds toward the carcase.

They were not all of one species, but were made up of many sorts and sizes, from little gray fellows

three or four feet in length, to blue, man-eating sharks of fifteen or twenty feet.

In port, we frequently saw sharks swimming around the vessel, and we came upon a few lone wanderers in midocean; but, unless we killed a whale, they were rarely enough seen by us. Let blood be shed, though it be thousands of miles from shore, and they surrounded us in schools.

I was allowed but a moment to look before Nye said to me, "The ol' man wants yeh aft, Tom," and I passed on to the quarter-deck.

As I came to the captain and saluted, he pointed to a large shark that was just pushing his head on to one of the killers below us.

"Do yeh see that feller?"

The shark made off, leaving behind him a round hole in the blubber of the whale, and the captain continued: "That ol' cuss took suthin' like half a dollar that bite. He must ha' took mighty clost to a gallon o' ile. You git here in the boat and fetch the next feller that tries that on with a lance. Don't let 'em git a holt afore yeh hit 'em nuther."

The captain stood by and watched until I sent the lance down through the back of a big man-eater that had come within reach.

"That 's the talk!" he exclaimed. "Right behind the flippers like *that* an' the' won't come agin—not a secont time. Now keep 'em off a spell."

The boat in which I had thus been stationed hung from davits just off the quarter-deck, where I could see all that was done upon the whales. Three of them were moored side by side immediately under the boat; one lay amidships, where it had been placed for the work of the morning; and the other was secured nearer the bow.

A sort of gateway had been opened in the bulwark opposite the killer upon which the work was to begin, and both mates were standing in it with their long-handled spades. The brig sat rather low on the water and the body of the whale could be readily reached by the spades without the building of any special stages to stand upon. A huge hoisting-block had been fastened near the foretop on the foremast, and its mate was resting on the deck close by the gateway. A rope, roven through both these blocks, extended from the upper one down to and through a third block which was secured to the deck on the right of the try-works, and thence passed on forward around the windlass, where a number of men were waiting for the order to hoist away. The captain was standing out of the worst of the muss, on the railing near me, where he could oversee and direct the work to be done.

It is not my intention to go into all the details of the process of cutting in these whales. In the first place, after the lapse of so many years, they are not

all fresh in my memory; and, again, it is doubtful whether the reader would be much interested in them. But the work upon these killers was the simplest of its kind, and, since it illustrates the manner of dealing with whales in a general way, its prominent features will be set out.

The mates, plying their spades, commenced just back of the head, and cut a gash several feet in length along the body of the killer next to them; then, beginning at the two ends of that gash, they cut through the blubber in parallel lines obliquely back and inwards toward the side of the brig as far as they could reach. By this means a flap about three feet wide and three feet long was marked out on the side of the animal. Then Nye, having first secured a rope about his waist, dropped down on to the killer.

The carcase was lying on its side; the smooth upper surface, rising hardly a foot above the water, afforded an uncertain foothold for a man. A slip, and our boat-steerer would be among the sharks, dozens of which lay waiting for his arrival; but no slip was made, and what might have been did not happen.

A spade, similar to those used by the mates but having a shorter handle, was now passed to Nye, who, first assuring himself that his footing was good, and taking a survey of the horde of wolves

eying him, placed it in the gash at one corner of the flap, and, prying upon it as a gardener raises a sod, quickly dissected a large piece of blubber from the body beneath him.

“ All ready, sir,” he announced.

Jim now joined Nye to help make a hole through the flap preparatory to the next move. The heavy hoisting-block was then lowered over the side, and its wide blubber hook passed through the hole in the flap.

“ Heave away there!” bawled the captain to the men in charge of the windlass.

A noise meant for a song arose from the bow, and the big machine commenced to rumble and turn, winding in the ropes connected with the blocks, and our cutting in was fairly under way. Slowly but steadily the big blubber hook came up the side of the brig, bringing with it a long flap of blubber, while the mates kept their spades busy cutting the strip longer. Thus, little by little, the whale was rolled over and over as he was unwound from his sheath of fat.

The oil of the killer is found in a layer immediately under the skin. Such a layer exists on all whales, precisely as the fat is found upon the hog, and is known as blubber. On different parts of the body and in different species of whales it varies in thickness, being anywhere from an inch to eighteen

and even more inches in depth. The thickest blubber on these killers was probably five inches deep; but on subsequent occasions we were to see it much thicker.

As the lower block by means of which the blubber was hoisted reached its fellow aloft, another hole was made in the blubber near the body of the whale, and a short chain inserted temporarily to secure the flap to the side of the vessel. Then the flap was cut off above the second hole, and the long "blanket piece" swung in and lowered to the deck, after which the blubber hook was passed through the new hole, and the hoisting was renewed. So it went on, piece after piece twelve or fifteen feet long and about three feet wide being swung in upon our deck, until by nightfall four of the six killers had been turned out of their hides and sent adrift, the heads having been previously severed and hauled on board.

When compared with the heavier and more complicated process in cutting in a sperm whale, it was light and simple work, but before it was finally done we found it hard enough to make us very tired of whaling.

I remained in the boat until near noon, when my place was taken by another of the boys; and, after getting something to eat, I was set at work at something else.

The sharks had kept me very busy. Not all of them that came near ventured an attack upon the killers. The blue sharks alone seemed to possess the necessary courage or ambition for that. The others hung off at short distances, awaiting the time when the carcasses should be cut adrift, in the meantime snatching up any loose bits of refuse that might float among them. Not a few of them showed a strong tendency to cannibalism, and, without waiting for the life to depart from their agonized brothers, the victims of my lance, eagerly devoured them.

When I first began the slaughter the work was delightful to me. To hurl a lance through the vitals of these hated of all hated fishes sent a thrill of pleasure all through me ; but, as the hours dragged along and the thrusts were repeated again and again for hundreds of times, it became monotonous labor.

A big shark would come gliding up to a killer, cautiously raising his shovel-like nose for a scooping bite of blubber, when down would fly my lance in and through his body just back of the side fins, and that shark would cease to care for earthly things. In a moment he would go whirling around and around in the throes of dissolution, followed as he sank by a crowd of his hungry brothers, tearing and pulling at his mangled body. It was even amusing for thirty or forty times to see this horror repeated;

but after that it was wearisome, and a dull sort of compassion for the unfortunate creatures took the place of my joy in the work.

Much the larger number of the sharks gathered opposite the killer amidships, where they were out of reach from my lance. They took a lively interest in what was going on there, since anything savoring of cruelty or blood always recommends itself to these hyenas of the ocean. Now and then some unusually enterprising member of the school would dash in, and ripping off a piece of flesh make off with it before a spade thrust could be given to make him sorry, when the entire swarm would join in a chase for the morsel, just as we have seen chickens or pigs do over choice bits on shore; but, for the most part, keeping well away from the sharpened spades of the officers, they lay quiet or swam sluggishly about in the water, greedily eying the red flesh as it was unrolled before them. Then at last, when the fat had been all peeled from the killer, and the carcass cast off to make room for another, there would be a scramble for first place on the sinking body, and the huge mass would settle slowly out of sight covered with the squirming, wriggling demons.

One might have expected that with the turning loose of the first carcass we would have been rid of this pack of sharks, for, although rated among

the smaller whales, the killer carries several tons of eatable flesh on his bones; but, in fact, the number of sharks hovering about the brig was not appreciably lessened until the last one of our killers had been delivered over to them for a cleaning up. For a short time after one of the carcasses was sent adrift there would be a thinning in the swarm; but, within an hour afterwards, the water would be again full of them, seemingly as hungry as before.

The blubber, when taken in on deck, was still to be sliced before it was fit to be put into the try-pots, a process which added greatly to the discomfort and ardor of our toil. Two men were constantly employed with spades cutting off the ends of the blanket pieces into strips. These strips, each three feet long and three inches wide, were then in turn run through a mincing machine operated by cranks. The end of a strip would be placed in the mouth of the machine skin side down, when, upon the turning of the cranks by the men, a blade would cut through the fat to, but not through, the cuticle. A start being thus made, the strip would be drawn a fourth of an inch farther into the mouth of the machine, when down would come the blade for a second cut, and so on it went until the entire strip had been made into thin slices, all of them held together by the unsevered skin, and the blubber was ready for the try-pots.

If you place fat pork upon a hot spider the grease will at once commence running out over the iron; and in just that way the oil is forced from whale blubber on shipboard.

Two large iron kettles, much like the soap kettles of our grandmothers, were set behind the foremast in a square brick framework, and under them, connected with a short sheet-iron pipe for draught, was a fireplace. This structure constituted our try-works. The mincing machine stood at one end of it, and, as the blubber was sliced, the fat was thrown into one of the kettles, where a boat-steerer kept stirring it with a long iron fork until it had acquired the proper degree of frizzle, after which it was taken out of the kettle and tossed upon the "scrap" pile, to be used as fuel for trying the rest of the blubber. In this way each whale was made to furnish the fire to try his own fat, and to leave fuel for starting in upon another one.

As the oil accumulated in the try-pots, it was baled off into a funnel beside the works, and from there conducted into a metal cooling tank standing close by the main hatchway; and, after becoming sufficiently cooled there, it was drawn off by a syphon into casks in the hold, and thus stored.

The oil as so prepared had nothing of the pungent odor of the oil with which we are familiar on shore. It was almost colorless and was agreeable to the

taste. During the first three days of the work we threw our hardtack into the try-pots to cook, and found them greatly improved in flavor by the oil; and, if our cook had seen fit to use it, he could have added materially to the enjoyment of our meals while the oil remained sweet.





CHAPTER IX

THE WORK CONTINUES

ON leaving the boat on that first day, my first work was at the crank of the mincing machine, where for two hours my share of the product was certainly well earned. Then for two hours my duty was to take the blubber from the machine and toss it into the try-pots, an easier if dirtier job than that at the cranks. Then I fed the blubber through the machines for another two hours. The windlass was kept continuously rolling, but my weight was rather too light for effective use there, so I was kept about the try-pots, changing from one thing to another, until midnight, when I was allowed to go to my bunk for four hours of sleep.

In an instant I was back in my home. My father, looking wonderfully like the captain of the brig, sat at the breakfast table with his newspaper, and mother was covering my buckwheat cakes with New Orleans syrup, when some one shook me by the shoulder. It was Frank.

“Come, come, come! This ’ll never do. We ’ve got to git suthin’ into us an’ go at it agin. Come, come, hustle up here, Tom.”

“Oh, bother!” I growled. “Why could n’t you let me alone until I had had those flapjacks!” Then, joining in the shout which followed, I continued to mourn. “Dum it all! That ’s the way when you dream anything good—you never quite get what you are after.”

Stiff and sore from heads to feet, we dressed and climbed on deck. A strip of gray on the eastern horizon told of the coming day. The air was soft, still, and delightful. To be sure, there was a faint odor from the blubber on the decks, as well as from the bodies over the side, and smoke was pouring from the pipe on the works. The oil, too, bubbling and boiling in the kettles, sent out its steam to taint the atmosphere; yet, when compared with the reeking stuffiness of the den we had left, the air was pure. The mincing machine was steadily clucking, clacking, clucking; the spades could be heard thumping, thumping, thumping; and the fire under the pots crackled and flickered brightly. All about, as it had been four hours before, was noise, bustle, smoke, and confusion.

It took but a moment to souse our heads and faces with sea-water—not with any idea of cleansing them, but to refresh ourselves and wake us up.

Cold salt water and whale oil do not mix well; but some of us thought the bath made us more comfortable!

Our ablutions thus accomplished, we followed the kid back down into the forecabin for our breakfasts. No one complained that morning of there being any mistake about our fare, and, having dispatched the regulation diet without comment, we reported once more for duty.

I had expected to renew my work around the try-pots, but, much to my satisfaction, was ordered at once back to the station in the boat instead, where I went in good spirits.

Reddy had been in the boat all night, but had probably fallen asleep, as the work of the sharks upon the killers under the boat too plainly proved, and, as I approached, the captain was in the middle of a tirade against him. Dozens of white spots, round and broad as hat brims, gleamed up through the darkness from below, to convict the poor fellow of the accusations brought against him, and he slunk willingly away when I reached the spot.

It was still too dark to see at all well, but the phosphorescent lights in the water following every movement of the sharks enabled me to do effective work among them until the daylight was fully restored, and called forth the commendation of the master,

“ You ’re ’bout the slickest at that of any feller we ’ve got.”

Soon after daylight, Nye again dropped over the side on to one of the remaining killers, and a blanket piece was quickly started from his body; and, about ten o’clock in the forenoon, my job in the boat came to an end by the removal of the last of the killers to its place opposite the gateway.

We had not yet so much blubber but that the master wished for more and the lookout had been steadily maintained at the masthead. Frank had been rewarded for “ raising ” the killers by being stationed aloft a large share of the time while the rest of us were engaged in cutting in the whales, but did not seem to have been regardful of the captain’s desires in that respect, as may be gathered from his remarks made in confidence to me some days after we had cleaned up:

“ Say, Tom, if you fellers had n’t kep’ up sech a tarnal racket, mebbe I might ha’ raised a nuther school for yeh. Course, I knew yeh was all achin’ for me to do it. But, do yeh know, for the life o’ me, I could n’t help listen to the ol’ man swear. Say, he must ha’ graduated some’ers where they teach cuss words, eh! ’Sides, I had ter watch that circus o’ your ’n down there. How yeh did plug them sharks! What a lot of ’em the’ was, too! I started in to count ’em once — had three whacks at

it, fust 'n last, an' come out diff'runt ev'ry time. Yeh see, yeh could n't tell when yeh got done countin' 'em. Yeh 'd think yeh was through, and then yed 'd see a lot yeh knew yeh had n't teched; or else yeh 'd find yeh 'd be'n countin' of 'em twice over. Made two hundr'd an' ninety once, an' t'other times the' was more an' the' was less—yeh could n't keep track on em' no way."

It is not probable that any one of us was more faithful during that week. The home attractions were far too strong to be overcome by a chance of prolonging our work. If we had seen whales, we would have made the fact known, but we were at no trouble to discover them.

By noon of the second day, the last of the killers was cut loose, and had gone rapidly out of sight under its load of wolves.

Although it was beyond the reach of robbers in the sea, the blubber now lying in heaps on our decks was exposed to a still more formidable marauder. The sun was pouring its scalding rays upon the fatty piles, and oil was streaming out of them and flowing along the scuppers almost as freely as it was trying in the pots. The scupper holes had been carefully plugged, but the glossy, rainbow-tinted water everywhere around us bore ample testimony to the escape of our oil. There was no time for star-gazing or theorizing about the destiny

of man. There was no time to think about the intolerable heat and glare that was at the bottom of our hurry. We could only growl and work, work, work, sweltering in the grease twenty hours of each twenty-four, until the last bit of blubber had been sliced and lay simmering in the kettles.

Oil was everywhere—on the decks, the railings, the masts, the sides, the rigging, the sails, and even in our beds. We had left our work at midnight, or at whatever hour relief came to us, and tumbled into our berths saturated with it. A few of us had rubbed our bodies off with oakum before turning in to our blankets, but the greater number, long before the work was all done, thought of nothing but needed rest, and, heedless of consequences, flung themselves into their bunks dripping with the oil. In the end, the cleanest berth reeked with the filthy fluid. Since the work had begun, the floor had been left uncared for, and now lay hidden under an accumulation of scraps of biscuits, potatoes, meat, oakum, and litter, simply disgusting to look at. We had had neither the time nor the strength to pick up or sweep the forecastle until now it seemed veritably a hog-pen.

At last the final drop of oil disappeared from the cooler through the syphon, and the bung of the last cask was driven in. Some fifty barrels of fairly good oil had been secured, and we could have been

happy in the prospect of a good rest; but, alas! the brig must be cleaned from the top of her masts to the floor of our den, and from the tip of her bowsprit to the rudder. Not only that, but every garment we wore, and every comforter in our bunks, must be cleansed of the oil.

I think none of us realized when the change in the oil commenced, although we stopped frying our hardtack in it about the third day. The bodies over the side had been steeped in brine, and had not become very offensive to us; but the fat on the decks had not been thus protected, and, before it was finally all rendered, it was decidedly pungent in our noses. The oil in the try-pots, too, instead of remaining the sweet, amber-like liquid it was at first, became darker in color and slightly rancid.

No person who has never been through it can conceive of the labor entailed on our crew by this necessity for cleaning the ship. The oil had soaked into the unpainted woodwork everywhere about the brig; and, after we had scrubbed it off from some surface where we did not wish it to be, a moment of exposure to the blazing sun would bring out more of it, and the back-aching toil was to be gone all over again. If we had been provided with suitable means for prosecuting the work, it would still have been hard enough; but sea-water, sandstone, brushes, and human sinews were our only resources.

The fresh water stored in the brig was not available for such uses. We were not allowed even to wash our faces in that. We had nothing better than deck buckets for clothes tubs, and were limited to cold brine and soap for dissolvents. Indeed, we were practically bound to the cold salt water, for, although our soap had been highly extolled by its seller, it proved fit for nothing but to be dumped over the sides to the sharks, who, had they been there, would most likely have rejected it.

We did our best to clean up, but both the brig and ourselves remained dirty to the end of the voyage.





CHAPTER X

LAND—DESERTIONS—A NEW DEAL

FOR some time before we came upon the killers we had been cruising back and forth, with no definite objective point in view. Whales were as likely to be found in one place as in another so long as we remained on whaling grounds. Now the captain ordered on all sail, and, day after day, we shaped our course by the compass, with no variation in its direction. We in the forecastle were not informed of our destination, but all of us knew we were bound for some port, and became feverishly anxious to reach it.

In this way, propelled by light breezes, we sailed on for more than a week, when the cry we were hoping to hear came from aloft:

“La-a-a-and ho-o-o! La-a-a-and ho-o-o!” the first word lovingly held and the last muffled though drawled.

We were in sight of one of the Azores Islands, but, as yet, the report could not be confirmed from

my post at the wheel. As it had been for months, the horizon remained a line of unbroken blue.

The captain stepped into the rigging with his glass and presently announced to us:

“Ye-ah! There’s Flores, dead ahead.”

After that it seemed hours before a faint line could be discerned from the deck above the horizon—a delicate little spider web marking the outline of a blue haze beneath it which we knew to be land. It was such a small island, too, looking no more than a foot or two across; but what wonderful sensations the sight of it produced on the crew! It is scarcely the subject for description—these feelings at the first sight of land after months of the sea. To be appreciated they must be felt. The sailor may love the sea. It is possible there is an infatuation in it for him not shared by others. Of that I cannot speak with knowledge. But certainly never was such enthusiasm displayed on our vessel as was always brought out in the crew upon hearing that cry of “La-a-and ho-o-o!” Whatever may be his love of mother ocean, there is no question but he adores his mother earth.

We lingered on the railings, on the bowsprit, in the rigging, on the foretop, everywhere with faces turned in the one direction, eagerly discussing in our minds the unfolding picture before us; while, little by little, the island grew larger, wider, taller,

and, losing its haze of blue, became gray, then brown, and finally green, as it stood out in its miles of length. Then, almost hidden among the bluffs, the little village of Santa Cruz came in sight; the Stars and Stripes were spread to the breeze at our spanker peak; and we hove to opposite a landing place, something like half a mile from the shore.

We were not, however, to go ashore. The captain ordered his boat, and we took him to the landing, a short stone wharf at the foot of a steep bluff, when he went himself ashore to make arrangements for a supply of fresh water, leaving us sitting in the boat to await his return; and there we remained, stared at by a dozen or more boys and girls of the town who had come down to look, for more than an hour, when he came back and we rowed him out to the brig.

In our absence the crew had broken out and tied together a number of empty casks, which were floating beside the vessel when we reached her; and, the captain having given place in the boat to Mr. Bowman, we towed the casks in toward the landing, until relieved by a town boat about half-way in shore, after which we went back to the brig.

It was not deemed safe to lie so near shore during the night, so we made sail again and stood out to sea. The next morning at daybreak we again headed for the island; and, within an hour after

sunrise, came for the second time opposite the town. Several shore boats were there waiting for us with our casks all filled; and, after some haggling in mixed Spanish and English between our captain and some one in charge of the boats, we hoisted the casks aboard and headed away from the little port.

Our disappointment at not being permitted to land upon Flores was extreme, and we grumbled about it all that day and late into the night.

“The’ might ha’ given us a *smell* o’ grass,” Frank insisted.

“Huh! *we* don’t count. What difference does it make to *him*, so long ’s *he* can go ashore, whether we do or not? When he pulls the string we must dance, that ’s all. When it comes to having any fun, we ain’t in it,” muttered Johnson.

A few words from our officers might have avoided all this discontent, but it is not the custom for masters of ships to make confidants of their crews. The master is absolute and his will the law. It seldom, if ever, occurs to him that the wishes or the feelings of his men should be in the least consulted, or that it is worth his while to make conciliatory explanations when it becomes necessary or expedient to run counter to what they may have reason to think right. He is entitled to do just as he pleases, and intends to do so; hence, from his standpoint,

it is useless to waste time in talking over plans with his crew.

There was really no cause for serious complaint on this particular occasion, and a word or two from our officers would have satisfied us all. The island we had left behind us offered no inducement for pleasure seekers. Its principal town was an out-of-date collection of small and filthy stone shanties, and its people among the lowest, most ignorant and degraded of the Portuguese nation. Its shores were rocky, and in bad weather might be dangerous; its fields were few, rough, unfruitful, and forbidding. The island of Fayal was less than a hundred and fifty miles away, and while we grumbled we were speeding under all sail for its principal port. There we would find letters from home, and might even hope to meet friends or acquaintances from the United States. The reasons for leaving Flores and hastening to Fayal were on every hand, and the least of them, had it been given out, would have silenced us. But nothing was said to any of us about where we were bound, or of any prospect for a run on the shore, and a sense of ill-treatment was left rankling among us, which later on bore its legitimate fruit. The consequences of this custom of regarding men as unreasoning machines did not result in serious damage to the owners of the brig, perhaps, but it is

evident that a happy, satisfied crew must always be safer for the ship than one embittered by useless and undeserved degradation.

The next morning, dingy and smoke-capped but grand and dome-like, towering seven thousand feet above the water, Pico stood before us; while to the left of the peak, separated from it by a narrow channel, was the island of Fayal, as yet looking a hazy blue; and near noon, we dropped our anchor in its port of Horta, the largest town in the Azores.

Although we remained at this port a week, my recollections of the island are rather vague. We were first visited by three little brown men in uniforms profusely decorated with gold tinsel. For what they came, or who or what they were, I neither knew or cared at the time. I was too busy in my own affairs to speculate concerning theirs. After they had gone, the captain took his boat and went ashore, landing at the foot of some stone steps that were built out into the harbor. A soldier in a dark blue uniform, slightly decorated, but not with tinsel, was pacing back and forth and looking very fierce a little to the right of us.

"I 'd give a quarter ter duck that feller," Jim whispered to me as we stepped on to the dock.

On a bluff overlooking the harbor to the right of us was a massive stone wall, from the top of which bristled a few old-fashioned cannons. Indeed, as I

now remember it, everything in Horta was of stone. The houses and the streets, the fences and the bowers, the very hearts of the people and the backs of their donkeys,—all were of stone. Even the money of the place might as well have been of stone, it had so little value.

But it is not my purpose to dwell upon what we saw or did upon this piece of Portuguese territory. It has been too often and well described by others to be worth my while here. If the Anglo-Saxons could ever have been so swarthy and dirty and generally disreputable as the islanders we were thrown among seemed to be, it is probable we were afforded a glimpse of our forefathers of the fifteenth century brought down unchanged to these later days.

As he had done at Flores, the captain left us at the landing with orders to remain there until he came back. In a short time he came down the steps to us with a bag of letters, and we rowed out to the brig with it.

While we were gone everything had been made snug on the vessel, and we were left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of our letters. Except the Boston boys and Johnson, all received one or more of these missives from home. Johnson's friends did not know his whereabouts; and the toughs probably had no correspondents.

If only it comes from home, and finds you in some

out-of-the-way corner of the earth among an uncongenial people, it is marvellous how much of bliss can be brought within the bounds of one small envelope; and, sitting in the twilight on the bow, each with his bundle of letters, Frank and I eagerly devoured and exchanged the happy tidings.

When the last letter had been taken from the mail-bag, and Johnson's name had not been called, I understood and felt something of his disappointment. Rationally, he should not have hoped to receive anything from the bag; but who of us exercises his reason on such occasions? He had hoped for a letter; had hoped against his hope and his reason; had hoped on until the canvas was turned wrong side out and shaken; and had then turned away with shame and homesickness written upon every feature of his strong face.

As we finished reading the last of our letters, we saw Johnson by the railing, with his gaze fixed on the big mountain that loomed there dark and grim. We joined him there, and the three of us stood for some minutes in the silent gloom. All the sympathy we were capable of giving was his but found no expression in words, until, at last, I slipped my bundle of letters into his hand. "There may be something in them you would care to read," I said, repressing my feelings. He made no reply, but, keeping the package, turned and went below.

“Putty tough on 'im, hain't it? He 's a mighty good feller, and it 's too bad—too dummed bad,” Frank commented.

The next day the second mate's watch, which included Johnson and one of the Boston boys, was given liberty on shore. Reddy, who belonged in the mate's watch, applied for leave to go with them, giving as his reason for the request that he wished to be with his chum. His petition was granted, and he went with the others for the day. When night came, Johnson, Reddy, and the tough were all missing.

The following day our watch was given a day on shore, and we were instructed to keep a lookout for the truants.

It is not at all unusual for sailors to fall into bad company while on liberty ashore, and, after a disgraceful drunken debauch, to fall asleep in some out-of-the-way hole, from which, in due time, they emerge already sufficiently punished; and it was not yet believed by our officers that the boys had deserted the brig. It was known that the toughs would drink; and Johnson's habits in this respect were unknown to us.

We had spent the day without falling in with either of the missing boys, and were waiting at the landing for the mate, whose habits were apt to cause some delay in getting on board the brig after

a day of liberty, when a small boy ran down the steps among us. The crew generally was in a state of semi-intoxication that made it unobservant, and no one seemed to notice this boy as he bustled in and out among us, scanning each face in its turn until he came to me.

“ Señor Tom ? ” he whispered.

I nodded assent to his inquiry.

Then he slipped a bundle of letters into my hand and darted through the crowd and up the steps.

I knew now that Johnson had intentionally deserted the ship, but did not feel it to be my duty to frustrate his design by informing the boys of what had happened. So I buttoned the bundle inside my jacket and kept it there until it could be safely opened on board, and then found concealed in the middle of it this note :

MY DEAR OLD TOM:—You will not give us away, and I want to return your letters, and to thank you for the chance to read them. Your people are so much like my own, that the letters seem almost as if they were written directly for me.

We have left you for good, and are where the old man won't find us in a hurry. When he would n't let us ashore on Flores, I made up my mind to this. That was a scurvy mean trick, and it can't be tried twice on your uncle.

If we had thought you would have come with us, we would have asked you; but we knew you would n't do it. You are straighter than we are and could never hide.

The toughs are dandies at it. Neither you or I ever could have hidden as these fellows do—we would n't have known how. They are adepts at skulking and I am fast learning the trade.

If you find anything loose that used to belong to me, put it in your trunk, for it is yours now. I wish you no end of luck. Of course, you will keep on and get to be "old man" yourself. If you do, though, don't forget the days when you sailed before the mast. For *me*, I've had enough and am bound home to stay. The *boys* are all right, but hang whaling, I say. There is neither fun or money in it for me. Good-bye. J.

I said nothing of the receipt of this letter to anybody, and all search for the deserters proved unavailing, so the captain was obliged to replace them by Portuguese from the island, of whom he expressed his opinion to the mate:

"These here fellers hain't Yankees; an' there's no use gittin' less than four on 'em."

This addition to our number in the forecastle required a new distribution of the berths. Logically, since Johnson had been my bunk mate, one of the newcomers would be bunked with me; but I looked them over and openly rebelled.

I was not uninformed of or disloyal to the principles of democracy upon which our politics rest, but as those men came down into our den, bringing their swarthy skins, their uncombed hair, their treacherous black eyes, and their general untidiness, our declaration of the equality of men took on a

more definite shape to my mind. The equality declared by us was, after all, only an equality in rights under the law; an equality which did not of necessity admit every man to share your bed. These men were welcome to an equal share of the salt meat, of the hardtack, of the potatoes and the coffee, and of the drudgery of the life we endured—those were rights given them by the law; but a logic or a political declaration that would force one of these fellows upon me as a bed-fellow was clearly bad. Life, liberty, and happiness could not be agreeably pursued by me in such intimate relationship with these men.

In my dismay I lost control of my good sense for the moment, to become silly.

“Look here, boys, there’s got to be a new deal. Unless he comes to me by fair lot with the rest, I’ll not have one of those fellows in with me,” I declared, too hotly.

Reddy had bunked with Jack, to whose mind logic was logic, and my manner irritated him. “Mebbe yeh’d like ter put *two* on ’em in with me then,” he shouted.

“I don’t care whether you have two or four,” I snapped back. “*I* won’t have ’em.”

Aside from being the largest boy among us, Jack was possessed of a quick and violent temper, backed by undaunted courage. Now he jerked off his coat

and stood up menacing me. "One o' them fellers takes Johnson's place, sonny, or we 'll known in about 'a minute who 's a whipper-snapper, you o' me," he yelled.

My own coat was flung off and there would undoubtedly have been an unfortunate fight but for Frank, who interposed between us. "Hold on now, boys," he said coolly, with a hand on each of us; "we hain't had none o' this sort o' thing, and we don't need none of it now."

"I 've stood all the bullyin' I 'm going to stand," I commenced; but he turned squarely upon me.

"Hold y'r tongue, Tom. Y'r mad, that 's all. Wait 'til yeh 're cooled a bit, and then, if you fellers want to fight, we 'll fix things and see fair play." And, with Jack and myself glaring at each other past him, he continued still more calmly: "We all know either one of yeh would fight any time there was any need to fight, but there hain't no sense in it now. Why, boys, there's four o' these chaps. What 's the matter with givin' of 'em two o' the bunks, and the rest of *us* doublin' up? The' don't none of us want 'em, I guess. I know *I* don't. Toughy wa'n't none too clean for me; and these fellers is all a blamed sight wuss."

Jack's anger was by this time gone. "Why 'n thunder did n't we have brains enough ter think o'

that afore we went ter kickin' up sech a —— of a racket, Tom ? Say, I hain't in your watch. What d' yeh say to *my* bunkin' 'long o' you, eh ? ”

“ That 's all right. Nothin' would suit me better,” I responded heartily, with extended hand. “ Come on and do it.”

So our trouble ended by Jack taking Johnson's place in my bunk.





CHAPTER XI

JACK AS A TONSORIAL ARTIST

THE newcomers had stood by in utter ignorance of the cause of all the disturbance. Knowing not a word of English, they must have been bewildered by the noise.

One of them was a tall, heavily built young fellow, named Antone. The others were short underfed boys, one of whom was also named Antone, and both the others gave their names as Joe. We at once classified the Antones as big and little, but deliberately converted one of the Joes into Pete.

They were dressed precisely as we were, and not improbably looked quite as respectable as did any of us. Their features were rather more regular than ours, and their clothes, fresh from the stores of the brig, were much cleaner. It may be doubted whether on coming on board a stranger might not have chosen either of them in preference to one of us for his bunk mate, if he had missed what caught the eye of one of our number.

“ Gee whiz, they ’re lousy ! ” he exclaimed.

A closer inspection of the shining black locks of the men confirmed this statement. Nits gleamed throughout the dark masses.

“ The’ ’s only one thing to be done. Them heads has got to be shaved,” Jack announced with decision.

It is not usual for whaling ships to be free of vermin, and our brig was by no means so; but up to that time, the species of vermin had been limited to cockroaches and rats. The cockroaches, although often something like two inches in length, and always fond of toenails, did not annoy us greatly. They were very numerous, and upon the rolling aside of our blankets rattled and clattered away in swarms; but, aside from the noise and their ugly appearance, they were entirely harmless. Having learned that our tempers were vicious and our company dangerous to them, the rats kept as much as possible out of our sight. The bugs, being less intelligent than the rats, had suffered many a cleaning out, but with no apparent loss of numbers. We had not been pestered with lice, and if it could be avoided were resolved not to be infested by them.

Jack touched Antone upon an arm and pointed up through the open gangway. “ Savve ? ” he asked.

The big fellow understood, and we filed after him to the deck. Somebody produced a pair of scissors

and gave them to Jack, who took them and stepped in front of the big fellow.

"Me cut hair," he said with a flourish of the instrument.

It is a singular thing that most of us use that kind of English whenever we have occasion to address a foreigner. We seem to think our language will be unintelligible in its proper form, and, after embellishing it with such adornments as we think suited to the comprehension of our auditor, we deal it out in such odd bits as Jack now proceeded to administer to poor, stupid Antone.

"No savve, eh?"

Antone stepped back a pace to get away from the scissors.

"Come, me take off—savve?"

All four of the newcomers here suddenly started for the quarter-deck but were headed off by us and rounded up in front of the try-works. But the bustle and noise of the proceeding attracted the attention of the steward, who came hastily forward to look after the interests of his fellow-countrymen. The moment he appeared they all opened upon him at once, with voices and pantomimic action, and kept it up until Jack interrupted:

"Hang it, steward, what 's all this powwow about, anyhow? We want to git to work afore it gits too dark."

The steward had been taught in the usual school. "They no savve what want—what go'n' do?" he said.

"Wa-al, if the' want ter know mighty bad, tell 'em we 're goin' ter peel their blasted heads for 'em. Tell 'em that, will yeh? We 're goin' ter peel them heads," Jack informed him.

Now the steward understood the word "peel" in the sense it carries when we speak of peeling a potato, and interpreted the message to the men in that light, causing four faces to become ghastly and four hands to seek their knives.

"Savve?" inquired Jack, still of the steward. "We won't stand no foolin'," he continued, tapping his own knife significantly. "Tell 'em we don't want ter have ter hurt 'em, but them heads is goin' ter be peeled afore they go below agin."

"Wha—wha' for peel 'em?" the steward asked tremblingly.

"Their dummed heads is chuck-full o' lice, an' we 're goin' ter cut 'em out," was the assuring reply.

"Lice—lice? Me no savve what *is* lice."

"Lice—*lice*! You darned fool! you don't know what lice is! Why lice is — lice is — why, doggone y'r punkin head, lice is *lice*."

Here Frank came to the rescue. "Bugs—bugs," he explained. "No savve bugs — bugs?" he repeated over and over, finally illustrating his meaning

by scratching first his own and then the steward's head.

The latter act brought comprehension to the mind of the cabin cook. He grinned his appreciation of the matter, and then inquired:

“Wha' for you peel 'em? Why no you cut hair?”

“Oh, thunder!” roared Jack in much disgust. “That 's jest what I said we was goin' to do. Me cut hair, see? Me cut 'em—peel 'em—take 'em off—rub 'm cabase-se, see?—savve you?—savve now?”

As the steward disclosed to his countrymen our real intentions, their faces assumed a less ashen color, but they became sullen. Big Antone stared defiantly in the face of Jack, who returned the gaze without flinching.

“Come, git on here! Me cuttee you hair,” commanded Jack firmly, pointing to a convenient hawser-post.

The steward talked for a moment to the men, after which for several minutes, amidst most extraordinary gesticulations and grimaces, all of the Portuguese shouted and talked at once. The steward was doing his best to pacify the other men and to induce them to submit quietly to Jack's demand; but they remained stubbornly perverse. No eloquence at the command of the steward could

bring them to compliance with the request. Not one would budge to obey. At last, his patience evidently exhausted, the steward shrugged his shoulders and started for the cabin, calling back to us as he went:

“ They say they no do it.”

In an instant both of Jack's arms encircled big Antone, and that worthy was flung upon the designated seat. Several of the boys sprang to Jack's assistance and held the fellow in place, while Frank and myself waved back the other Portuguese, who seemed disposed to interfere. If they had seriously thought of rescuing their companion, they quickly abandoned it, and huddling by themselves in the waist of the brig, remained savagely glowering at us watching the proceedings to come.

When aroused by anger, the usually placid and happy-natured Jack could be demoniacal. He now seized Antone's hair with a vicious grasp, and, thrusting the scissors among it, twisted and gouged about with them until the poor fellow screeched with pain. It was but the work of a few minutes, despite the desperate struggles of our victim to escape, to complete the removal of the hair, so far as it could be done with shears.

“ Somebuddy git my razor for me,” directed Jack. “ Yeh 'll find it down in my chist.”

At sight of the razor, which was soon found,

Antone made a dash for liberty that sent Jack sprawling, and dragged two of the boys half-way across the deck; but in a moment the poor fellow was thrown back on the seat, bellowing from rage or fright.

Jack, who admired pluck, credited to the Portuguese the knockdown, and interpreted the noise as rage. His own anger was rapidly cooling. The razor was too dull to cut the hair nicely. "Git me some soap or suthin'," he said directly. "I 'll cut 'im all up with this thing, this way."

A boy brought him a scrub broom, a bucket of sea water, and a bar of coarse soap. "Guess that 's good 'nough fer the likes o' him," he remarked.

The scowl had passed quite away from Jack's face. He pushed the proferred broom aside. "No, no, boys. We don't want ter hurt 'im. That won't do no good. Poor devil," he added, lathering the head with soap; "dunno 's we doughter blame 'im. Yeh better b'lieve we 'd be mad an' want ter thump somebuddy if we 'd b'en him. No; the' hain't no use hurtin' of 'im."

After that, the shaving was skilfully completed without unnecessary suffering for Antone, and the big fellow was soon released and sent back to his comrades with a head more free of dirt than it had been since the day he was born.



"HE SEIZED ANTONE'S HAIR WITH A VICIOUS GRASP."



Then the others came forward in turn and submitted to be barbered without a murmur, and the work was done.

The remedy employed was the law of might, but we felt justified in adopting it. It was violent but effectual, for no lice afterwards appeared among us.





CHAPTER XII

BOATS AND EQUIPMENTS

THE next day after initiating our Portuguese in the art of civilized warfare upon vermin, we sailed out past the island of St. Michels upon another cruise for whales.

To correctly understand some of the incidents soon to be related, some acquaintance with the appliances used by us will be necessary.

It has already been said that we carried three whale-boats. Each of these was a counterpart of the others, built of cedar upon graceful lines, sharp at both ends, and about thirty feet long by six wide. There were five broad seats across the boat, on which, beginning at the bow and going back in their order, sat the boat-steerer, the bow oarsman, the midship oarsman, the tub oarsman, and the after oarsman. In the extreme point of the bow was a metal-lined notch (chock) for the line to run through when fastened to a whale. Back of that, and sunk five or six inches below the gunwale, was

a triangular deck known as the box, and large enough to hold a few fathoms of coiled rope. At the stern was another deck, even with the gunwale and reaching forward about four feet. On the right hand side and near the forward edge of this deck stood a round-headed post (the loggerhead), to which the line could be secured when necessary to hold it. Probably six feet and a half of the length of the boat was taken up by the two decks, leaving about twenty-three feet of space for the men and other equipments. Cleats for bracing the feet of the men were scattered in convenient places along the bottom of the boat; and on each side, opposite to each rowlock, other cleats were fastened to hold the oars when at rest. Between the box in the bow and the forward thwart there was room enough for a man to stand in comfortably to throw his harpoon or lance; and at the stern was plenty of standing-room for the officer who steered the boat and for coiling the whale line after it should be drawn in.

Each boat, besides a small spritsail, carried six oars and five paddles. The oars were all as long and as heavy as could be used in the boat. Five of them were for use in propelling the boat; the sixth, which was much longer and heavier than any of the others, was the steering oar. The paddles were designed for use in stealthy approaches upon game, and were light and well formed for the

purpose. The sail was raised to help us back to the brig after a chase—very rarely while chasing whales, and never when about to go on to one.

In suitable slings at the bow were five harpoons on the left and three lances on the right hand side. In addition to these weapons there were also slung in convenient places at the bow a hatchet, a spade, a knife, a boat-hook, and a crutch upon which to rest the harpoons on lowering for game. At the stern was a boat-compass, a bag of hardtack, a water-tub, a bailing-bucket, and no doubt some other things my memory fails to recall. Handy to the bow oarsman were the nippers, made by sewing together several layers of coarse canvas, for use in laying hold of and checking the whale line when running too swiftly to be grasped by the naked hand. There were also several short warps and lines about the boat, besides the rowlocks and other things.

A whale gun and four explosive shells were added to the outfit whenever we lowered for whales.

It remains only to describe more particularly the whale line and the offensive weapons already mentioned, and we will have done with this rather dry subject.

At the time of our encounter with the blackfish, the whale line in the captain's boat had been shortened somewhat by cutting, and had afterwards been

rather badly chafed in the struggle with the killer, so that on the day we left Horta it was thought best to put a new one in its place. I was summoned to assist Jim in this work, and am the better able to describe the method and manner of disposing of the line for that reason.

A bale of the best quality of perhaps three-quarter-inch hemp line, still wrapped as it came from the factory, was placed at our disposal on the quarter-deck. Rope thus tightly wound for months is in no condition for use in a whale-boat. As it followed the first whale, a kinky line would be apt to rid the boat of its crew in no time. So our first step was to let the line out over the stern where we kept it dragging in the water behind the brig until the last sign of a kink had gone out of it. Then we hauled it in and coiled it on the deck to dry, after which we removed the old line from the boat to make place for the new one.

The boat carried two tubs for the reception of the whale line, one immediately in front of the tub oarsman's seat and the other just back of the bow oarsman. Leaving several feet of it to hang over the front edge of the tub nearest the bow, we coiled the line into that tub from the bottom until it was level full. Then the rope was carried back to the other tub and coiled as neatly as possible into that in like manner until it was full. Thence the line

was continued on back and looped around the loggerhead, and from there carried forward and laid in the chock at the bow, where it was secured in place by passing a wooden pin over it across the notch. Then it was brought back into the boat and a few fathoms of it coiled upon the box, after which its free end was made fast to one of the harpoons, when we had a line in place for instant use.

This done, the line was taken off the loggerhead and thrown loosely out of the way upon the after tub, and we spliced the first end of it to a water-tight buoy, of about the size and shape of a butter firkin, sitting beside the forward tub.

When it was all done, we had a line nearly half a mile in length, secured to a harpoon at one end and to a buoy at the other, in condition to be suddenly jerked from the boat at any probable rate of speed without danger to the men.

A second harpoon was then bent on by means of a short warp, and we were ready for any game that might come along.

The harpoon is used to fasten to game. Without having first made the boat fast to him, it would in most instances be folly to inflict a wound upon a whale. In nearly all cases, when a whale is struck or frightened, he dives for cover, not infrequently going so deep as to take out all of the line. There

he remains until it becomes necessary for him to take breath, when he rises to the surface and starts away in a wild struggle for his freedom. If a lance or gun were to be used in the first instance, the animal would usually escape without suffering from a fatal wound; and in most cases, even where the wound was fatal, he would still successfully elude



HARPOON BEFORE ENTERING THE BLUBBER.



HARPOON AFTER ENTERING THE BLUBBER.



LANCE.

his pursuers. To avoid such consequences, the harpoon has come into use. It consists of a head, a shaft, a wooden pole, and the line attached to it.

The completed instrument is a pole-like weapon, about eight feet in length, having a perfectly sharp point, six inches back of which is a barb, in principle like that of the common fish-hook. When entering the blubber, the head with its barb lies lengthwise on the shaft, and makes a hole about an inch and a half long by one inch wide. Once

through, as the whale pulls upon the line the barb catches in the tissues in which it is imbedded, and a small wooden peg that holds the barb close to the shaft is broken. Then, presto! the head arranges itself at right angles with the shaft, and refuses to come out of the hole it entered. The law of mechanics that two solid bodies cannot occupy the same space at one time favors the obstinate little head, and since the blubber and skin of a whale are decidedly tough, a harpoon once well placed is apt to hold until the animal dies. The shaft was made of the best wrought iron, and reached perhaps three feet and a half beyond the pole to which it was tied, the pole being of sufficient length and weight to insure accurate aim and considerable force.

Two of these instruments were always attached to the line, and, if possible, both were thrust into the whale. A man of average strength and skill could do effective service with the harpoon at a distance of about twenty feet; but in common practice the boat was placed close up to the animal, and the boat-steerer jabbed or pushed his iron home.

The lances were secured by short lines to the boat, and differed essentially from the harpoons. The heads were shorter and wider, shaped like perfect leaves, and possessed of cutting edges. The shafts, being intended to go deeper, were longer than those of the "irons," and there was no barb to

prevent the withdrawal of the head. They were used for killing the game.

Both the lances and the harpoons were kept sharpened to the keenest edge, and their heads constantly smeared with oil to avoid rust. So, also, of the spade, the hatchet, and the knife — all were sharpened like razors and well oiled.

The whale guns with which we were provided were too heavy for easy use at the shoulder, and were heartily hated by the officers because of a tendency to kick. They threw an explosive shell, in size and shape much like the head of an ordinary sky-rocket, ignited by a protected fuse after entering the body of the whale. If well aimed and exploded, the effect of these bombs was most disastrous to the victim; but it was usually difficult to aim a shell at a vital part, and the guns were not always brought into action.

Lastly, more important than all else, were the men. The boat-steerer rowed with the rest of us until near enough to strike the whale, when he stood up and threw his harpoon. After that, he changed ends in the boat with the officer in command, who had until then been steering at the stern. The officer then went to the bow to wield the lance or gun in killing the game, and the boat-steerer assumed the duty of swinging and steering the boat. In addition to pulling his oar, the bow oarsman was

expected to nip the line as it passed him, when directed by the officer to do so. It was the duty of the tub oarsman and of the midship oarsman to watch and attend to the line running from the tubs near them; while the after oarsman was required to dispose of the line as it was hauled into the boat after being pulled out, and to bail water from the boat when necessary. Thus, every man in the boat had his known place and work to do, and generally kept and did it.

All of these things—boats, equipments, and duties—were the outcome of extended experience, and were eminently adapted to the business.

Having finished putting in the new line, re-sharpened and oiled the weapons, and filled the little tub with fresher water, Jim announced the boat fit for work. Nor had we long to wait.





CHAPTER XIII

WE SEE SPERM WHALES—NYE IS DEPOSED

A CLOUDLESS sky, with still, soft, balmy air, ushered in the next day, and at sunrise I took my turn aloft to look out for whales. For as much as an hour after that I gazed out upon the vast mirror spread around us, coming more and more to realize the insignificance of man in the scheme of nature and that a shipload of us at that moment constituted but part of a mere speck of dust upon the polished ocean, when I was recalled to practical life by a flash. It was no more than a flicker of light, yet it differed in some indefinable manner from the rays usually reflected from the water, and aroused me to alert attention. For some minutes I searched the ocean for the source of that flash, before a shining black form raised slightly above the water some miles from the brig, and a puff looking like steam rose obliquely from it a few feet into the air.

“ There she blo-o-o-ows! ” I screeched with all my power.

Then other such forms appeared, followed by similar puffs, and the common cry went up from all parts of the vessel.

The mate announced a minute later: "It 's a school o' bulls, sir."

As excited now as the greenest boy, the captain bawled,—

"Man the boats!"

I waited no further order, but, leaving my post on the jump, in less than thirty seconds was at my place in the boat.

"All ready, sir," said Jim.

"Lower away."

As we dropped from the davits, I slipped the loop of line about the loggerhead, and when the boat touched the water, my oar was in its rowlock.

"Get away, boys!"

The very slight delay occasioned by my being aloft enabled the other boats to get a few seconds the start of us, and the mate kept the lead he had thus secured.

As we left the brig, the whales were swimming leisurely here and there, scattered about over something like a square mile of the sea, and I saw no more of any of them until we had been rowing some twenty minutes, when the master raised his hand significantly in command for silence, and whispered:

"Ship y'r oars easy an' take y'r paddles."

This brought us face to face with the whales, and as I stood up and took my paddle, one of them was rising immediately under the bow of the mate's boat, scarcely two boat's lengths away from us.

"Give 'er to 'im!" the mate roared.

Nye jumped to his feet and threw first one iron and then the other at the beast. Then a fluke, thirteen feet broad, wrapped in bright tinted spray, was flung forty feet into the air, where it waved for an instant, and rushed straight down under the water.

"—— ——— ———, the fool missed!" declared the captain.

It was too true. The line in the mate's boat was hanging limp over the bow. It was not running out after the whale. The first iron had gone over the animal without touching his body, and the second had pricked him enough to sting.

The next moment a dozen other enormous flukes were waving in mid-air to disappear like flashes.

It is said among whalers that a pricked whale carries the school. Certain it is that every whale in this scattered group seemed at once aware of his danger and sounded for cover.

The language of the captain and mate used during the succeeding minutes cannot be set forth here. Both officers were furious in their rage, and outdid all previous efforts in vituperations showered at Nye, ending by the mate's shouting:

“ Frank, dump the — — — — — idiot out o’ there, an’ then see if *you* c’n hit a whale that ’s bigger ’n the ol’ town hall, when he ’s right under y’r nose! ”

Pale and agitated, Nye changed places with Frank in the boat, making no attempt to defend himself.

The next moment some one cried: “ There the’ be—there blo-o-ows! ” and the tirade had passed.

A dozen monstrous dark brown heads broke from the water a mile away and went rushing off.

The captain bit his lip. “ Pull,” was all he said.

As though he would leap the mile separating us from the whales, every man bent with his whole might upon his oar.

“ Easy, boys! We ’ve got a long pull afore us. Don’t rush ’til I tell yeh. Lay well down on y’r oars, but take it easy. Long, stiddy strokes is what tells on a long pull,” the captain cautioned us. He was an experienced driver who well knew how to get the most from his crew.

On and on we rowed after that, the captain now chiding some boy for shirking; now, as becoming restive we strained too hard at the work, saying to us soothingly: “ Easy—easy, lads. We ’re doin’ fust-rate, an’ gainin’ on ’em. Take it long an’ stiddy as yeh ’ve be’n doin’. Don’t jerk on y’r

oars, it 'll make yeh sore. Take it cool an' we 'll git 'em yit."

In this way we pulled on until noon, when we had recovered about half the distance between us and the whales. Then, one at a time, we were allowed to rest our oars and refresh ourselves from the biscuit-bag and water-tub, leaving four men still at work, and our speed scarcely diminished.

By this time my arms and back were paining me almost beyond endurance, and it was a great relief to be able to feather my oar at rest when my turn came, and face around to look at the fleeing brutes in advance of us.

Up to this moment we could judge of the whereabouts of the animals by watching the face of the captain. Now, as I sat munching the hardtack, they were plainly in sight, something like half a mile ahead of us, grouped well together and swimming at the rate of about eight miles an hour, circling slowly toward the left. The gait of the whales was not, therefore, rapid, but, in our jaded condition, it was tasking our ability to overtake them.

As they tumbled on before us, these whales were awkward and unwieldy enough. A huge rounded head would show at the surface of the swell, quickly raise into the air ten, twelve, fifteen, often twenty feet, followed by an enormous round body, black

and glistening in the sunlight, and there for a few seconds both head and body would remain rushing along, sending out on either side great rolls of water and foam just as a ship does in her flight; and then the whole mass would plunge ahead and sink from view under the water. A moment later the same head would again appear, and the peculiar lunging leap would be made precisely as it had been made before. There were a dozen or more of the monsters so engaged, four or five of them being kept constantly on exhibition, a spectacle to be beheld nowhere else on the globe—the giants of the ocean fleeing in abject terror from man.

Slightly refreshed by the warm water and tough bread, yet considerably rested, in a few minutes I resumed my oar, and for a long time after that saw nothing more of the whales. Then, while the gloom of approaching darkness was settling around us, we could hear the crashing breaths and the swashing of the water as the great animals plunged along behind us. The captain's eyes were now gleaming with hope, and his body swayed in concert with ours, while he began urging us to our work for the first time that day:

“ Pull, now! Lay down there! Git after 'em, boys! ”

Then came the order we were most anxious to hear:

“ Stand up, Jim! ”

But still we were not done, and the captain was bellowing at us:

“ Can’t yeh send ’er a *little* harder? *Ten* foot more, an’ we ’ll be *up* to ’em. For y’r mothers’ sakes, pull. Pull—pull—*pull*, I tell yeh. *Git* down there—ev’ry ——— of yeh, git *down* to it. Lay y’rselves out now —*lay* down on ’em. A long pull an’ a strong pull—*all* together, now. Oh! *oh!* OH! why in ——— don’t yeh git *down!* ”

So he continued, pleading, commanding, praying, sobbing, his face afire, his body convulsed, his voice tremulous with excitement, while we tugged and strained with every muscle and nerve in our aching bodies, on and on and on, in the futile struggle to gain the beggarly feet separating us from the brutes and rest.

“ My Lord! Wa-al, boys, it ’s up! ”

The captain collapsed upon the little deck behind him, and sat mopping his perspiring brow. We turned in our seats in time to catch a glimpse of the departing fluke.

We had suffered defeat. The whales had recovered their senses, and, no longer “gallied,” taken the most obvious means to evade pursuit. They had gone into the darkness of the ocean where we could not follow, and our chase had ended.

The stars were glittering cheerfully above us, and the air was cool and refreshing as we lay back to rest our tired muscles. For minutes no word was spoken, and no sound disturbed the quiet save the gentle ripple and klinking of water along the sides of the boat. The other boats were too far away to be made out through the gloom, but a bonfire had been lit upon the brig and was casting a reddish glow upon the distant horizon to assure us that we were not altogether alone, and aid us on our return.

A breeze had sprung up and was blowing toward the brig, so we set our little sail and headed for the light, after which, while we were wafted slowly along, the hardtack again went the rounds among us and was rinsed down our parched throats by the warm, ill-smelling water from the tub.

It was after midnight before we could distinguish the green light of the brig and nearly dawn when we reached her side and hoisted our boats to the davits. Then we dragged ourselves wearily out upon the decks and were soon sound asleep.

It was a long way up to the cross-trees the next morning, and when I reached them to take my turn on the lookout, I seated myself upon them with no fear of falling off, and, snugly wedged between the shrouds and the mast, went fast asleep, not to wake until twice called by the boy sent to my relief two hours later.

I was very much startled at finding myself thus caught, but was less uneasy upon looking over at the other mast to see Jim staring stupidly down at the second mate and saying:

“ ‘*Sleep*—’sleep, d’ yeh say? Wa-al, now, yeh c’n bet y’r boots I was. I ’d a slep’ through—fire. *Sleep*—yes, an’ I don’t care who knows it, nuther.”

As I reached the foretop in my descent I saw the mate come from the cabin, yawning and stretching his arms, and go upon the quarter-deck. A conference followed between the mate and captain, and then Nye was summoned to them. He came up out of the cabin, haggard and wretched.

“ Take your duds into the foc’sle an’ bring Frank’s aft,” the mate said to him, abruptly.

“ Aye, aye, sir.” Nye saluted and obeyed.

Thus summarily was he deposed and Frank installed as a petty officer.

Nye was not a coward. It was his first voyage as boat-steerer, and his first attempt to strike a sperm whale. He had been simply over-anxious, and lost his presence of mind in one of those singular paroxysms which at times unnerve the strongest men. Yet there was much to warrant the judgment of his superiors. The whale he had missed was worth several thousand dollars, a large share of which would have fallen to the captain and mate. He

had been placed so near to the animal that he might easily have pushed his harpoon through its blubber without letting the weapon out of his hands. There seemed to be no explanation of his conduct other than upon the theory that he was lacking in pluck. It is doubtful if, under the circumstances, any jury would have acquitted him of a charge of cowardice; and on the trial of such a case those who now judged him would have been the prosecuting witnesses. The mate, too, was eager to promote Frank, a thing not possible while Nye retained his position.

Just or unjust, no other punishment could have been expected, and the majority of the crew, remembering their own sufferings in consequence of Nye's act, were satisfied.





CHAPTER XIV

• GAMMING AND RACING

AFTER that, some weeks passed during which I stood at the masthead, at the wheel, on the night lookout, scrubbed paintwork, washed decks, mended clothes, studied navigation, played checkers, decorated my bunk with drawings of whales, horses, sharks, roosters, cattle—did anything and everything that duty or ingenuity could suggest to take up the time, until the incident about to be related came to give a little more color to our lives.

It was a typical day in the tropics. The sun poured its fierce heat upon the decks and into every hole and cranny about the brig, while the atmosphere stirred only enough to enable the vessel to keep her course.

I was standing at the wheel, scarcely conscious of the roasting to which we were subjected, when the cry rang out from aloft:

‘ ‘Sa-a-a-a-ail ho-o-o!’ ’

For the reason that whales are less likely to be

found in the tracks of commerce than elsewhere, whalers purposely avoid the common ocean routes. In consequence, it was a rare occurrence for us to meet another vessel while on our cruises. Up to this time we had seen perhaps half a dozen merchantmen, but had passed them all without hailing, while we had not seen any other whaling ship.

We were becoming tired of seeing the same faces day after day, and were longing to see some others of our kind, so now our rigging was suddenly alive with the crew trying to catch a glimpse of the stranger.

At the first sound the captain asked sharply,

“ Where away ? ”

“ 'Bout two p'int's off the port bow, suh.”

“ Let 'er up two p'int's, Tom,” the captain directed, and as the bow answered to the wheel a rousing cheer went up from twenty throats. We knew we were to try to speak with the stranger—to converse with other men.

At the end of an hour the coming vessel was visible from the deck, a mere spot upon the horizon, and, aided by glasses, the officers declared her to be a whaler and headed toward us, upon which another roar of delight went up all over the brig.

In the light wind the combined speed of the vessels did not amount to much, and it was the middle

of the afternoon before we finally hove to within speaking distance of each other.

“ A-ho-o-oy there!— what brig ’s that ? ” came floating upon the still air to us.

“ The brig *Grace*, Provincetown—Smith. What Bark’s that ? ”

“ *Mary*, Wood’s Holl—Winslow. Come aboard, won’t yeh ? ”

“ All right,” shouted our master.

In a few minutes, having passed a boat on the way from the bark taking her mate to our vessel, we rowed up alongside the newcomer, a clumsy old-timer with sides standing away up out of the water, and having a bow almost as blunt as her stern.

“ A reg’lar ol’ barnacle tub,” Jim pronounced her.

A row of woolly heads, shining faces, and white teeth arranged themselves along the railing above, and then a rope ladder was dropped down to us. The captain having mounted to the deck, we made the boat fast and clambered up the side after him.

As my head reached the railing, a big darky accosted me with:

“ Say, boss, got any tobac’ ? We hain’t had none sense we lef’ Ann’bon much ’s fo’ monfs ago.”

“ I don’t use the stuff,” was my too curt reply.

That answer fixed my social standing on the bark at a very low notch. The crew had no further regard for me. A man who did not use tobacco, as one of them soon after insisted in my hearing, was "wus 'n a no 'count nigger." The other boys in our boat were all provided with the necessary credential and were warmly welcomed, but I got the cold shoulder at every turn while we stayed on the bark.

This craving for tobacco prevailed almost universally among the sailors we met. The first words spoken on gamming any ship during the voyage was a request for the weed, and after that first experience I took pains to secure a plug from the cabin stores before leaving the brig to visit the other vessel.

The greetings between the two captains were most cordial. I think they had never met before, but they acted like brothers; while Jim was met by the boat-steerers on the bark with every show of esteem. Then, after the hand-shakings had been gone through with, the officers went together into the cabin, and we followed the foremast hands down into their quarters.

In addition to the usual smell of bilge-water and mustiness common to such places, this forecastle was unbearably hot and tainted with the peculiar odor of unwashed negroes, circumstances which

would have soon driven me on deck, even though the dislike of the crew for me had been concealed.

Except the officers, all of whom were white, every member of this crew was coal black. I think there was not a man in the forecastle of any lighter shade than jet. It was the darkest set of men I have ever seen together, and the worst smelling. The man who shipped them must have been possessed by a passion for the color, and have accepted no one not up to his standard hue. The men were all heavy, well-built, muscular fellows, of uncertain ages, the smallest of them being fully as large as our big Antone. "Them 's buck niggers, them is," our boys whispered among themselves. And on looking them over I could not help thinking that, in a race for whales, we would stand small show of winning against such a crew; but my judgment had not then been matured in the light of the experience which was to come.

I remained below scarcely a minute and returned to the deck, where it seemed very dull, until Jim and three boat-steerers came out of the cabin. There was nothing on the deck of this old hulk amusing or handsome to look at, and I was much relieved when Jim beckoned me to come aft, and introduced me to his companions as "jest 's good 's a boat-steerer a'ready." This recommendation was accepted as rank enough to entitle me to

admission in their set, and we swapped yarns and became pretty jolly before the captain appeared on deck ready to go.

“Man the boat,” Jim shouted at a signal from the master, and I repeated the order at the fore-castle gangway, above the uproar of an ascending song from below.

“Good-bye. Hope yeh ’ll fill up.”

“Same to you. Mighty glad we met yeh. So long.”

The captains grasped hands warmly, and then our master dropped over the side into the boat, followed by us.

“All away,” he commanded, and we had finished our gamming.

Our boat had been slung in place on its davit but a moment, when there rang out in concert from the mastheads of both vessels:

“Thar she blo-o-o-ows!”

What a power was always in those words for us! They pervaded the entire ship and brought forth all the latent energy of the crew. At this particular time, not only was this true, but the cry involved a struggle for supremacy in a race with men of different blood.

We may have doubted our ability to win, but there was no hesitation in the start. In launching the boats both crews moved with admirable pre-

cision and alacrity. Not an error was committed, and neither crew obtained any advantage.

There were four boats from the bark against our three from the brig. The boat I was in started even with that of the mate of the bark, but within a minute the bark's boat commenced falling behind us, and presently we heard its officer say to his men:

“ Yeh 'll have to do some dustin', boys. Them fellers move lively.”

Then, a little later, as the distance between the boats increased, we heard him shout:

“ Pull-ll-l, yeh black louts! What 'n thunder are y'r doin' ? Are yeh goin' ter let them little devils beat yeh ? *Bend* y'r backs! Git down, o' we won't be in a mild of 'em.”

In exact time, taking long, steady strokes and feathering our oars as we lifted them, with every muscle and nerve in full play, we rowed on, widening the gap between us and the boat astern. The officer there was now waving a paddle over the heads of his crew and shrieking like a mad-man:

“ Pull-ll-ll-l, yeh blackimps o' hell! Pull-ll-l, yeh nigger devils! Pull-ll-ll-l, yeh — — —, or I 'll bat y'r pates with this! Git down on y'r oars, yeh — — — black coons — — ”

The voice was lost to us while the paddle still waved in mid-air, from whence it more than once

descended upon some luckless one of that crew. Then we arrived among the blackfishes, and our attention was distracted from the other boat.

Perhaps the race might have ended as it did, even though our officers had commanded the darkies, but it may well be doubted. I am sure their way of urging us was better calculated to bring out the best there was in us in the way of effort than any form of abuse would have been. At times, when close upon a whale, his face aglow and his brain afire with eagerness, the captain would urge us on with language that cannot be printed here, but we never took offence at that. We knew the man to be just and kind at bottom, and everybody swore some on shipboard. I doubt if it would have been safe for any man to wave a paddle over our heads, much less to have struck one of us, as we saw done by the officer in the other boat. We were Yankees, imbued with the spirit of our fathers, quite as quick to resent an insult as to obey a lawful command. At any rate, no one ventured to impose upon us in that manner.

Our driver stood mum and smiling in the stern of his boat, trusting wholly to our native ambition for success. His judgment was affirmed, for when the boats of the bark came within hailing distance of ours, each of our boats was fast to a fish, and the school had gone from sight. The blackfishes were

quickly dispatched, and then our captain called to the other, a smile still playing about his features:

“ I guess you 'd better take that one over there. He 's the biggest. We 'll take along the little fellers. Hope yeh 'll be in better luck next time. Good-by to yeh.”

“ Wa-al, all right. Wisht I 'd had your crew, that 's all. So long.”

Thus we parted, *our* crew happy.





CHAPTER XV

EATING AND DRINKING—TENERIFFE—A SEA TURTLE

“**S**TAR-AR-AR-B’RD watch aho-o-o-oy!”

I opened my eyes upon a picture-stained bunk ceiling, yawned, stretched myself, and rolled lazily out upon the trunk below.

“Gosh, but it’s hot!” This was said not to inform any one of a fact not known by him, but as a vent for my exasperated feelings.

“Kid here,” announced Kenney at the head of the stairs.

Big Antone went up the steps to receive the little tub; and having brought it down, placed it on one end of my trunk. One, two, three, four—fourteen unpeeled potatoes I counted out—two into each of the seven pans sitting before me, a large and a small root, for the division must be even. The salt junk was without form, but neatly as possible I divided it into seven equal parts, one for each man. There was always plenty of hardtack—everybody

could help himself to that. It was noon and too hot for coffee. The butter did not come that day, and there were no extras.

“ There you are, boys.”

Each of us took his pan and dispatched the contents.

This custom had arisen after we left Fayal. Before that our crew had been a fair-minded body, too liberal and well brought up to fight over its meals. In less than a week after the introduction among us of the Portuguese there had been a rough-and-tumble battle in which Antone had suffered most. He made complaint to the captain, who listened to our several stories and decided that Antone had been properly served, but suggested that we select some one from each watch to divide the messes in future. In our watch the choice for this duty had fallen upon me.

The trouble had arisen from a disposition on the part of Antone to help himself to the largest potatoes and to cut for his own use disproportionate and choice slices of meat, leaving one or more among us short of a just share. If long persisted in, this conduct could lead to but one result, and after the summary adjustment of our differences which followed it was some months before Antone needed to be punished for a like offence. Then, not satisfied with the division made by me, the big

fellow put his hand into the kid to select his own share, when Nye struck him a blow that sent him sprawling on the floor, from which he gathered himself together and skulked off without waiting for more. In that manner peace was finally maintained among us.

The meal finished, we went on deck to the relief of the other half of the crew.

It was my turn aloft, but before going up I stopped for a drink of water. The drinking water was kept in casks stowed in the hold, and was reached through the fore hatchway. These casks were piled in tiers, one above the other, with their bungs opening upwards. A long, tin, tube-like cup, to the open end of which was attached a string tripod, was employed to draw the water from the casks. Each time we drank we lowered this cup through a bung-hole into the water, and pulled it out full. There was only this one cup for the use of all the foremast hands. After being used, it was dropped most anywhere among the casks for the next man to find as best he could.

On this occasion it was a long time before I could find the cup, and then I found it covered with dirt and a gummy grease or slime. I rubbed it off with a wad of oakum, carried in my pocket for the purpose and lowered it through a bung-hole. When it was drawn out again a roll of gelatinous slime was

clinging to its sides and dripping from its bottom, which was in its turn wiped away; and then, filling my lungs with air, I hastily gulped down the water and leaped to the deck before breathing.

“ Ugh-wah ! Ugh-ugh-fugh ! What stuff to drink ! ”

Mr. Bowman was passing there just then.

“ Warm ? ” he asked.

“ Vile, sir. Bilge-water would be better.”

“ ’T is putty bad, I guess, for a fact; but we ’ll git suthin’ better ’n that afore long, now.”

“ Hope so, sir. That ’s ropery and full of slime.”

“ Ye-ah, ’t is gittin’ a bit slickery, I guess. ’T ain’t nuthin’ to what it *can* git, though. I ’ve seen it so darned thick yeh could cut it with y’r knife.”

“ Froze, I s’pose ? ”

“ No, *jellied*.”

I laughed aloud and went up to relieve Jack.

“ I guess we ’re going to get another peep of shore,” I said to him as he joined me at the top.

“ Ye-up, I know it. Heard the ol’ man talkin’ with Bowman this mornin’. And yeh want ter keep y’r eyes out termorrer, too. Mebbe yeh ’ll see suthin’ yeh ’ll want ter look at a spell.”

“ Whales ? ”

“ Whales — pooh ! *Whales*, d’ yeh say? — huh ! Yeh ’ll see *Teneriffe*.”

To me, Teneriffe was a small picture in an old geography. The figures used there in connection with its description had flown from my memory, and a mountain no more than two or three inches high was not a subject to create enthusiasm after laying a week under the shadow of Pico.

“ Is *that* all ? ” I asked contemptuously.

Jack looked at me as one having superior knowledge is apt to look. “ You ’ll find that enough,” he replied, and, twitching his belt into place, went on down to the deck.

The next morning, when our watch was called, every eye was directed over the bow. There, suspended in mid-air, distinct and beautiful, was the grayish top of the immense peak.

“ How far away is it ? ” some one asked.

“ A hund’rd ’n thirty odd milds,” answered the mate.

I do not know whether the phenomenon then before us was usual in that region. I supposed that every high mountain presented the same kind of appearance when approached from the open sea as did the one before us, and made no inquiries concerning it. No one on board seemed to think the scene out of the common, and it was looked upon by us green hands as matter of course. But there stood that enormous cone, with the blue of the sky beneath it unbroken for hours while we sailed

toward it, its base slowly widening and becoming darker, until just at night it rested upon the horizon, and the mountain rose ahead of us in all its massive grandeur sheer twelve thousand feet out of the ocean. As they ever fail to picture to the mind the form of mighty things, so words fail to convey the effect of this mountain upon our imaginations. Pico had been gloomily picturesque; this peak was bright and grand.

We were still many miles from shore, and it was not until the next morning that we hove to opposite Santa Cruz de Santiago, the principal port, and, looking up the sloping sides of the great mound, fully appreciated the beauty and immensity of this wondrous giant. Up, up, up, from the water's edge to the pointed top, from the soft verdure of trees and tropical plants at the base on to the hard, bare brown rocks beyond, and thence still on to the pink, purple, and dazzling white and gray in the heavens above, we gaped and gaped.

"Wa-al?" asked Jack.

"It is worth coming the voyage to see," I replied.

A boat came off from the shore to us, and a tinsel-covered officer, representing the Spanish crown, clambered on board, and held some conversation with the captain. An insurrection was in progress upon the island, and we could not be

allowed on shore. We must go on about our business until it should be known who was entitled to rule this part of Spain.

Our disappointment was very great, but we were soon absorbed again in the scene. The dirty stone town nestling at the foot of the mountain, with its wrangling, ignorant, ill-ordered and worse-governed cut-throat people, became nothing beside that dome. We forgot our need for fresh water. We even forgot to grumble as we sailed out of the harbor still gazing, until at nightfall the great peak loomed a dark outline upon the sky, unstirred, heedless of the strifes of those people, as it had stood before Spain was and will continue to stand when Spain shall be forgotten of men.

The next morning we awoke under a clouded sky, with nothing to be seen but the restless ocean, and entered once more upon the monotonous tediousness of life upon the sea.

It was weeks after that before anything happened worth mentioning, and then it was no more than an encounter with a sea turtle.

I was standing at the masthead when we discovered him swimming near us.

"There 's a bustin' old mud turkle right alongside," I announced to Jim, who was on the other mast.

"Ye-ah! By gum, that 's a welter, too!" he

answered, and then reported the facts to the officer on deck.

The mate lowered away to effect a capture. The instant the boat struck the water, startled by the noise of it, the turtle dived and swam rapidly away from the brig; but in that crystal-like sea his course was easily followed, and when he was at last compelled to rise for a breath, an iron was driven ruthlessly into his short neck. The poor creature struggled desperately for a few minutes, but was overcome and hoisted while still alive upon our deck.

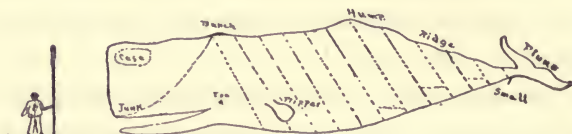
Aside from his barnacle-covered back, his greater size and his clawless feet, this turtle was like his brothers of the shore. He was about six feet in length by four or five in width, and must have weighed several hundred pounds. The flesh was made up of the usual variety of color and quality found in turtles, and was very palatable. A piece of it was turned over to Kenney to be cooked for us in the forecastle, and was heartily enjoyed there.

“Turkle soup, please!” was the cry by every Yankee when the kid came down to us that day.



CHAPTER XVI

MORE ABOUT THE SPERM WHALE



THE turtle had become a mere memory, and I was standing my turn aloft. The sun had risen and was reflecting its rays from a glassy, heaving swell, while I listened for the bell raps that should summon me to the more free employment of scrubbing down the decks, maybe. The taps rang out, and my foot was seeking a ratline under the cross-trees to begin the descent, when something away off on the water glimmered and held my eye. I stopped in time to see a dark object gliding for a moment, and then it sank, leaving behind it a small cloud which quickly faded to nothing.

The brig resounded then with my cries, for again I had raised whales.

A minute later whales could be seen for miles in any direction. A school of "cows," numbering probably a hundred, was rising everywhere about us. The air became suddenly redolent almost to suffocation, not with the fragrant odors of flowers and spices, but with the nauseating smell of many whales. The heavy breathing of the animals, crashingly harsh or softly blowing, as the beasts were near or afar, could be heard from all sides. Great black heads and bodies rose here and there for a few seconds and sank noiselessly as they had come, making no more than a ripple upon the water; or some more active and sportive member of the tribe threw her whole body above the ocean, to fall back with a mighty, swashing splash. Some, unmindful or unconscious of our presence, stood upon their heads in the water, and thrashed it into sheets of shining spray with their fan-spreading flukes, in sheer exuberance of frolicsome life. All alike swam or sported around us wholly unsuspecting of their danger.

An instinctive hush fell upon all on board, and each man tiptoed to his place in a boat. The officers spoke in suppressed whispers. The boats were all quickly and quietly lowered, the whale lines were looped over the loggerheads, and, leaving

the oars across the seats, every man of us sought his paddle.

In a moment, not twenty feet ahead of our boat, a rounded black hump came gliding up out of the water, a broad, smooth head, glistening in the sunbeams, rose beside the boat-steerer in the bow, the crashing sound of rushing steam struck our ears, and Jim was hidden from our sight in the cloud of vaporous breath as he drove both his irons to the handles into the beast.

“ *Stern—stern all!* ” the captain roared.

We dipped our paddles, and the boat backed away from the floundering whale. A quick and mighty upheaval of water followed, the great fluke swept high into the air, and the animal went swiftly down.

“ *There!* ” How much of satisfaction was expressed in that one word, while the master beamed upon us!

But a single moment was given us in which to look around; but in that moment we saw dozens of flukes. Look where you would, they rose glittering black, and disappeared amidst the spray. In one mighty concert they flashed in mid-air and were gone. It seemed as if every whale in the school had taken the alarm and dived.

Luckily, both the other boats had come upon whales almost at the same instant, and were now

fast. Indeed, although he was not then in the least aware of it, the boat of the mate was fast to two whales. In throwing his second iron, Frank had missed the whale he aimed at and struck another alongside of her.

Our line was whizzing out through the chock at the bow too fast to suit the captain.

“ Nip 'er there! ” he ordered.

The bow oarsman succeeded in only partially checking the outflow of the line, and smoke began to rise from the loggerhead. The friction then was becoming serious.

“ Douse that line, Tom! ”

I bailed a bucketful of sea-water into the tub behind me and followed it by another on the loggerhead.

The line continued to run rapidly out until the first tub had been emptied and the other was little more than half filled. Then it slackened and we secured a second turn with it around the post. A minute later, dozens of whales could be seen breaking from the water something like a fourth of a mile from us; and then, towed by our line, we moved off in the wake of the fleeing school.

The rate of speed was much less than it had been when we were towed by the killer. If we had been chasing the whales with the oars, we would have thought it fast enough; but as it was the pace set

seemed rather slow. It probably did not exceed eight or nine miles an hour. The deep tunnel into which we had seemed to sink behind the swifter animal was absent, and we could see in any direction without interference from the spray cast from the head of the boat.

It was very comfortable sitting in our boat and holding the line while we watched what went on behind us. The mate's whales, for some or no reason, were slower to rise than ours had been; and we were well under way, with the water rippling musically past us, when, side by side, the two rounded, square-nosed heads rose less than a hundred feet astern of our boat.

On they came, neck and neck like racers, making the peculiar lunges before observed in the run of the bulls. The heads would shoot up five, six, eight, sometimes ten feet, and come dashing after us with the waves foaming and tumbling out on each side for a few seconds; then down they would slump out of sight, in another moment to again come rushing along after us.

In less than ten minutes after we began to move, for half a mile back of us, dozens of other whales were coming, all with the same awkward, plunging leaps, and all moving pell-mell in the one common direction. The school was bunching and we were near the middle of the group.

The second mate, who was at some distance in advance of our boat, like us was surrounded by frightened, fleeing whales.

"They seem to be coming together, sir," I remarked to the captain before he changed ends in the boat with Jim.

"Ye-ah. When yeh hit one, yeh hit the hull lot. The' most always do this way," he replied good-naturedly.

When one of a school of sperm whales is struck, it seems to be the custom for them to join in flight. On the occasion of our failure to secure the game, though in the start the whales were scattered over a large territory, they all came together in a little while, and after that kept throughout the day in a compact group, until they had nearly completed a circuit of the vessel. So now, as we left the brig this school had been scattered far and wide in every direction, yet within a few minutes here they were practically in a single body, moving in concert and seemingly controlled by one mind.

These coincidences can scarcely be attributed to accident. It is possible that instinct is the governing power, but it has much the appearance of an intelligent marshalling in consequence of some kind of communication between the whales.

As they ran, the whales came gradually closer and closer to each other until we found ourselves

hemmed in among the mass of heaving, plunging, blowing animals, as they moved swiftly along impelled by the common impulse to escape. The waters were alive over a space of some acres with the rushing troop, amidst which it was no longer possible for us to identify the span of the mate or our own particular prey.

It did not seem to occur to anybody that the rising of one of those scrambling brutes under our boat, even by accident, must result in sending us out into the seething, writhing jam, to certain death. We were oblivious to all danger there as we watched the scene around us.

“ Look—look—sure ’s y’r born there ’s a bull—see ’im ? He ’s a dandy—that feller—hey ? ”

“ Did yeh see that calf—eh ? Wa’ n’t ’e slick ?—There—there—d’ yeh see ’im ? ”

“ Yeh c’n bet y’r boots the’ ’s a sock-dologer headin’ this procession. Wisht we could git fast to him—eh ? ”

These and similar remarks coming from the boys in quick succession, as half delirious with the joyous excitement we were borne along in the midst of that school of monsters, showed their state of mind.

Soon our boat commenced to lag. Our weight was beginning to tell upon the powers of our whale. One by one the other whales—those still behind us—overtook and passed us by. The mate then came

slipping alongside, near enough to call out as he passed :

“ Ta, ta, boys! Y’r a bit slow for this crowd. Bye, bye. We ’ll see yeh agin after a while, mebbe.”

A few minutes later, the line in front of us hung limp at the bow, and the boat glided on over it. Our whale had come to a standstill and was waiting our will at the other end of the rope.

We could still see the other whales ahead of us, both our boats yet among them but well to the rear of the school.

Jim now changed ends in the boat with the captain, and we pulled up by the line to within a few yards of our whale, when we were ordered to take the oars.

“ Put me on ’er, Jim,” the captain ordered.

“ Pull!” came from Jim to us.

“ There—hold ’er so.”

“ Hold ’er, sir.”

“ Stern easy, boys. There!”

The boat was resting with her bow within three feet of the sides of the whale.

I could now hear the captain’s “ Ugh-ugh-ugh!” as he thrust his lance into the animal, and it required all my powers of self-control to keep from turning my head to see what was being done.

“ Jest a leetle further forrard. I can’t quite tech the spot.”

“ Stern a leetle—there. Pull ahead easy—there! Hold ’er now,” Jim directed us, and the bow of the boat had been changed to the desired place.

“ Ugh!—ugh!—— ”

“ STERN!—Stern *all* ! ” screamed Jim.

With all our strength we threw ourselves on the oars and the boat shot back from the now dying whale.

A stream of blood burst from the top of the whale’s head, and then she rushed away in a circle about the boat, lashing the waves into foam in the agony of her death throes. Her sufferings were quickly over, and the huge body settled back in its bed, nothing more than a great black thing.

In the meantime a light breeze had sprung up, enabling the brig to move down upon us, and in a few minutes she hove to near our whale.

We then cut our line short and passed it on board the vessel, after which, Jim having bent on two more irons, we rowed away to the assistance of the mate, who was awaiting our coming. When we came near enough for us to hear him, he shouted:

“ We did n’t like to kill this one afore yeh got down here—’fraid she ’d yank the iron loose from t’ other one.”

At the moment, “ this ” one was lying on her back not far from our boat, with her long under jaw

standing upright out of the water; while the hump of her sister rose above the surface a little to one side of her.

As we arrived on the scene, a calf swam alongside the boat as though to greet it, and then dived under its mother. It was something like ten feet in length, about as large around its body as a common sugar barrel, and of a yellowish cream color—evidently a very young whale. Neither one of the grown whales appeared to take any notice of us.

“Guess we ’ll have to shoot ’em. Likely they ’ll start evenner that way,” the captain suggested.

“All right, suh. This darned ol’ gun ’ll prob’bly rip the shoulder off o’ me,” the mate complained, “but I guess mebbe I c’n stand it.”

With the captain standing in our bow, gun in hand, we headed for the whale whose hump was exposed, and the mate prepared to shoot the other one.

I was obliged to keep to my oar, and could not see what the captain was doing, but the mate and his whale were both in sight of me.

As she lay, the back of this whale bowed greatly and the middle portions of the body were sunk too deep under the water to be successfully reached by a bomb, and we were compelled to wait for a more favorable opportunity to shoot. Indeed, when the animals lie right side up, the water is a serious

obstacle to the use of guns for killing them, since it is only upon the recession of the waves from their sides, or upon some fortunate roll or movement of the beast, that his vital parts are exposed to the shot. It would be the merest chance that a bomb sent into the hump or back of the whale would prove fatal to him.

At last the jaw of the animal I was watching closed with a snap, the long body straightened out, and in a moment a side paddle showed itself above the water. Instantly the gun of the mate spoke and a bomb entered behind that flipper. At the same instant I heard the roar of the captain's gun, and another bomb had been sent upon its death-dealing errand into the vitals of another whale, and the cries of both the boat-steerers were resounding:

“ Stern—stern *all* ! ”

The now rushing whales started off in opposite ways, snapping the line as though it had been cotton thread, a matter of no consequence then, since both animals were spouting blood, and nothing would be longer needed to hold the boats to them.

“ There 's more yit for us to do, boys,” the captain declared exultantly. “ Git away ! ”

We bent once more to our work, and in two or three minutes were up with the second mate.

“ There 's another whale here som'ers,” he announced ; “ an' I 've been hangin' off, hopin' for

some of yeh to git down here an' hook on to 'er, afore I killed mine."

Just then a glistening, round, black mound rose silently out of the water fifty or more yards away, followed almost at once by the broad head of a cow whale, the vaporous breath came crashing out, and the great body sank again from sight.

"There she is! She 's be'n hangin' 'round ever sense this one hove to, sir," said Mr. Brown.

"All right, we 'll hitch on to 'er," responded the captain.

"Shall I change ends, suh?" asked Jim.

"No, you put me on to 'er."

"Pull, boys!" commanded Jim.

We laid to our oars and the boat moved ahead to the place where Jim believed the whale would rise. A few seconds later the hump glistened for a second time in the sunlight, this time directly ahead of and almost under the bow of the boat, and the captain pushed both his irons down into the great body.

"Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!" sang our whale line as it flew out and out in spite of frantic efforts of the bow oarsman to grip it with his canvas nippers, until the captain was standing at the bow holding the buoy ready to be dropped, and Jim had been ordered to cast off the turn at the loggerhead. Both tubs had been emptied of their line and only

that held by the captain remained, when the whale stopped in her downward flight, and the buoy was not dropped.

We then dragged enough of the line into the boat to secure another turn with it around the logger-head and waited for the reappearance of our game.

In the meantime we could watch the procedure of the other crew.

As soon as we were fast to the loose whale, Mr. Brown commenced work on the one to which they were fast. Like the other whales that had been killed that day, this one lay there quietly submissive to her fate. Again and again the officer thrust his lance deeply through the blubber of the animal without visible effect, until he finally announced with apparent disgust:

"The blamed critter hain't got no blood, no-how."

But she had blood, and he reached it a few seconds later. A wave-like tremor passed the length of the whale, her head was suddenly raised high into the air, and she came plunging toward our boat. In another moment we were smothering in blood blown from her nostril, the huge animal was rushing swiftly along beside us, the light was shut from above us by the great fluke swinging over the boat, and a horrible crashing swash told of how nearly it had missed the bow. In a second it was

all over, and the whale was floundering off in the inevitable circle, lashing the sea in her flurry, while we shivered and shuddered and looked.

“Jee-e-e-rus-alam! but that was clost,” ejaculated Jim, drawing a long breath.

Ten or fifteen minutes later the last whale came to the surface, and after a short run hove to and submitted to be slaughtered, as her kindred had done.

So rapidly had one event followed another that morning, we found ourselves all back on board the brig with five whales securely moored alongside, before noon.

As we finished tying up the last whale, the captain shouted:

“Extra duff and pie atop on ’t!”

And the promise was fulfilled that evening.





CHAPTER XVII

ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, HYGIENE, DIET, AND PHILOSOPHY

IT is not my intention to weary the reader with any attempted description of the work done during the next two weeks. The cutting in of a sperm whale is a much more complicated proceeding than the stripping of the blubber from a killer, because of a number of peculiar anatomical features that will be mentioned here. Indeed, I did not obtain an accurate knowledge of all the details of the process while on the voyage. My duties were so various and without system as to forbid anything like a thorough observation or understanding of the work by me at the time it was done. The attempts of others too at such descriptions warn me against the undertaking; and I shall content myself with a reference to the illustration at the head of the last chapter, where the lines of cutting are partially mapped out.

Of course, with the first flow of blood the sharks

commenced to gather; and by the time we got to the brig they were there in the usual swarms.

The calf, too, remained swimming about its dead mother until we had tied the carcase to the vessel, and soon after that disappeared. It was of no value to us and was left untouched.

We were allowed to eat our fill of salt junk and potatoes before being summoned to the work. A number of blanket pieces, three or four feet wide and six inches thick, were lying on the deck before we had our duff and pie; and after that the work continued without interruption until we had stowed away in the casks below a hundred and fifty barrels more of oil.

The sperm whale is often found in schools such as we had come upon — schools made up almost exclusively of one of the sexes. The first school we saw was composed exclusively of males. This we knew from their great size. There is usually little or nothing in the general appearance of whales to indicate the sex when seen swimming in the water; but, in the sperm whale, the disparity of size between the female and the male is such that whalemen determine the sex at sight from great distances. The female is seldom more than a third as large as her full-grown brother, and is timid by nature. Hence, if the whale is seen to be of great size, the whaleman approaches with a feeling of trepidation.

He knows he has to deal with a bull, an animal which enjoys a reputation for fighting considerably out of proportion with the facts supposed to furnish the foundation for it.

The male is often found alone, or with from one to a dozen companions of his own sex — rarely if ever with more; while the female is met with in schools numbering anywhere from a dozen to more than a hundred — never alone.

It is said that these large schools are usually led by some gray-headed patriarch, and that half-grown bulls are often found among them. The school from which we had made our captures was certainly made up almost exclusively of cow whales. There were differences in the sizes of the animals, but none such as to make it sure any of them were males. Some of the boys seem to believe they saw bulls among them, but I was not able to confirm the notion by my own observation.

There were a great many calves in the school, varying from those of a day old, such as the one already mentioned, up to youngsters scarcely distinguishable from their mothers.

The calves are harpooned by whalers only when a full-grown whale cannot be otherwise reached.

If there seems a probability that the mother will escape unless it be done, an iron will be thrown into a calf in the hope that its dam will return to look

for it; and this hope is frequently realized. In such a case, after all the other whales have gone on beyond sight, the mother will hover around her offspring until she falls herself a victim to the whalemen, when the calf may be allowed to go free.

It is not uncommon, either, for one cow whale to linger in sympathy around another one, as was done at the time of which I have written. They seem to have no idea of attempting the rescue of their friend, but in apparent solicitude for her fate, swim slowly about in the vicinity until they come to share it.

The whales we now had alongside were small whales, then, for they were all cows; yet there was flesh and bone enough in the smallest of them to have made five of the largest elephants ever seen.

In general appearance they resembled greatly magnified blackfishes; but they were lighter in color and less disgusting to look upon. The heads were chopped off rather more abruptly than those of the blackfishes, and the bodies were equally rounded and clumsy in shape; but the color was varied from coal black or dark brown on the backs to a yellowish gray on the bellies, gradually shading and blending into each other upon the sides; while the mouth was much more presentable than that of the smaller whales. The tongues were less prominent and lighter in color; and the teeth, though

confined to the lower jaws, were more perfect. In length, they varied from forty to fifty feet, and in the diameters of their bodies from six to eight feet. The flukes spread to a width about equal to a fifth or a sixth of the lengths of the animals.

But the head of the whale, which constitutes almost if not quite a third of the animal, deserves the most special attention, not only because it is the most valuable part, but because its anatomical make-up accounts for several things that have already been noticed in these pages.

At first sight one marvels that a creature possessed of such a log of a head can make his way along with anything like the rapidity with which we know this whale moves. Looked at from the front, this head seems to present an insurmountable obstacle to quick passage through water, for it offers a perfectly flat surface of several square yards' extent to be forced through the sea, and until we light upon the explanation the accomplished facts seem to be miraculous.

This explanation is found when we examine the under jaw of the animal and remember his odd antics while on a run. On one of these cows, from the corner of the mouth to its free end, the under jaw was about ten feet long; while where it joined the head it was something like two feet wide, thence tapering steadily to something like five inches at its

extreme point. Its under surface was a long ridge of bone tightly wrapped in skin, and was almost sharp in its outline. If the animal were to be held partially erect in the water, this ridge would look not unlike the cutwater of a ship; and, in fact, when the whale is in active flight, the ridge serves exactly the same office as does such a cutwater.

The killers, when fleeing from us, had hardly lifted their heads at all from the water. There was no need of their doing so. Their heads were wedge-shaped and offered the slightest possible resistance to progress in the sea. Lifting their noses just high enough to take breath, they poked them back into the waves and sped along. Not so with the sperm whale. His square head could not be thus forced through the ocean. A way must be cut for it, or the whale must fall an easy prey to his pursuer. This road is made by bringing the long, sharp under jaw to the front to divide the waves. As the head is thrust high into the air the jaw is thrown well forward and the animal ploughs his course through the sea precisely as a ship does.

This was sufficiently proven to us by the mate's span as they came along behind our boat. A head would be suddenly lifted and the animal would rush along until she had overtaken and passed her companion, who had slumped from sight the moment before; then she would sink in her turn under

the waves and the other whale would rise in a similar leap to outstrip her fellow in the race. So they came after us in a series of those lunges, alternately passing and falling behind each other, until both were lost to us among the scrambling school that surrounded the boat.

The head is seemingly too heavy to be long maintained by the animal above the water, so he lets it drop at intervals while he secures a fresh hold upon his element, and then makes another lunge and repeats it over and over until he is exhausted, after which he lies like a conquered sheep, submissive to the will of his foes.

A set of strong ivory teeth project in pairs from each side of the lower jaw, their size seeming to bear little relation to the dimensions of the whale in which they were found. The largest teeth we saw on the voyage were cut from the jaw of one of the small cow whales alongside the brig. They stood up four or five inches out of the gum, were hooked slightly backwards, and bluntly rounded at the ends. In number they are said to vary in different specimens, but in each of those that we saw there were twenty-four pairs of these teeth, set at intervals of some inches along each edge of the jaw. There were no teeth of any sort on the upper jaw and no grinders on the lower.

The principal food of the sperm whale is believed

to be the giant squid, a mollusk of which very little is accurately known. No one on board our brig claimed ever to have seen the whole of one, either dead or alive.

We saw a number of pieces of arms and tentacles that had been torn from these monsters and swallowed by whales, and the teeth of the sperm whale are well adapted for use in encounters with such creatures. Once we saw an unusually large piece of a tentacle floating near our boat, looking as if it had been just torn from its owner and then dropped without having been swallowed. It was of a reddish-green color, five or six feet long and perhaps four inches thick, indented somewhat on the sides where it had been squeezed into the spaces between the teeth of the cachalot, and supplied with a number of bony hooks in size and shape like the bills of hawks. The body of the squid from which that tentacle was torn was probably as large as any that have been reported by reliable witnesses; but, in my judgment, a dozen such arms would have offered no obstacle to the passage of the whale that tore it away.

In spite of the many and wonderful accounts of the size and strength of the squid and kraken that have been evolved from the imaginations of writers concerning the monsters of the ocean, there seems to me no sound reason to suppose that any mollusk

existing in the sea is sufficiently powerful to offer dangerous combat to the sperm whale. The octopus is not constructed thus to contend with the whale. He lacks the skeleton requisite as a basis for the muscular action needed for such a fight. His flesh is soft, and he has literally no backbone—he is nothing but a mollusk, albeit the most powerful of his kind. The animal he must meet not only has a bony frame and spinal column in proportion to his great size; but he has a muscular system which in sheer exuberance of its strength is able to toss a hundred tons clear from the water into the air. The largest squid ever seen would weigh less than a tenth as much as the smallest cow whale; while his arms and tentacles would be torn away and the life crushed from his soft body by the mere weight of contact with the animal.

It certainly should require more and better evidence than has been so far adduced to convince the reasoning mind that any mollusk, squid, kraken, or poulpe ever gave a sperm whale serious trouble in combat.

The squid is said to be always ready to embrace with fatal ardor any object coming within its grasp; and to keep its long tentacles feeling around for something upon which to bestow its attentions. The lower jaw of the sperm whale can be extended to nearly or quite a right angle with its body, and

when so dropped it might offer a tempting object for such an embrace. It is not improbable that the whale, groping his way in the dark recesses at the bottom of the ocean, does offer his jaw thus as a bait for the mollusk, when the arms of the monster are entwined about it and are broken away as the animal pursues his unchecked course, to be swallowed at leisure afterwards.

Next to the under jaw, the upper part of the head is interesting. If the flesh be removed from the skull of the sperm whale, the head is found to be as nearly wedge-shaped as that of the killer; but above the bones of the skull and resting upon them is an enormous mass of spongy tissue known as junk, to which we shall refer more particularly later on. On the right hand side, imbedded near the top of this junk, is a remarkable cavity called the case, from which it is not uncommon to bail by means of buckets ten or twelve barrels of clear oil. The use of this sac in the economy of the animal has not, so far as I am aware, been satisfactorily explained; but its presence in the head may account for one of the phenomena already mentioned in referring to the movements of the whale.

If death does not occur instantaneously, when fatally wounded the sperm whale goes into a convulsion during the progress of which he invariably travels in a circle. It has also been noticed that

when he takes to flight and runs very far his course takes the form of a circle. In his death throes, every such whale that we killed on the voyage started on a circle *to the left*.

May not the position of the case on one side of the whale's head explain this singular coincidence ?

The oil in the case is much lighter than the tissue on the other side of the head ; hence the left side of the head is heavier than the right side. When the whale goes into his death flurry, and his course is taken independently of his will, the heavy side of his head lags behind, causing the acute curve we have noticed. So, too, when the will holds lessening sway by reason of the exhaustion of the animal by long-continued flight, the same thing happens, though in less marked degree. In either case, the heavier side drags upon the lighter, and the circle results.

The eye and the ear of the whale also deserve remark here.

In addition to being exceedingly small in proportion to the other dimensions of the animal, the eye is placed a little way back of the corner of the mouth nearly a third of the distance from the end of the head to the fluke, where it is impossible for him to bring it to bear upon any object either in front of or behind him. This will be referred to more particularly later on.

The external ear is marked by a mere slit in the skin scarcely an inch in length and a fourth of an inch in width when opened its widest, placed about a foot back from the eye, and so constructed as to be completely impervious to water when the animal sinks to any considerable depth.

This mechanism is but another of the innumerable evidences of design in the creation of animals met by us at every turn. Men find it impossible to descend far into the sea without a rupture of the drums of their ears from pressure of the water upon them; and when it is remembered that the sperm whale must often seek his food miles under the surface, it is clear that without some peculiar formation of his ear, he would rise from his first sounding entirely deaf; hence the needed protection has been furnished by a self-closing orifice, and the deeper the animal goes the more perfect is the working of the device.

Nor does the diminutive size of the outer ear seem to prevent an acute sense of hearing in the whale, as we had abundant proof many times on this voyage.

But, even though no more than a reference be made to them, there are so many peculiar things about the structure of the sperm whale that there seems danger of becoming tedious, such as the nostril, the bunch of the neck, the ridge, the hump,

the small, and the fluke, all of which must be passed without further attention; but there are two matters relating to the conduct of these animals to which allusion will be made.

After his first struggle for liberty, I have said the sperm whale was like a conquered sheep, and have spoken of his flurry as a convulsion.

When first caught, a ram will struggle furiously to escape, but soon subsides and remains passive afterwards until fully sheared. So it was with these whales. The first passionate flight over with, they lay before us ready for the sacrifice. Not every sheep will remain quiet when nipped with the shears; and not every whale we saw lay quiet when prodded with a lance; but the majority of both sheep and whales are completely submissive after the first effort to get away. So the flurry seems to be in the nature of a convulsion.

If merely frightened, or when undisturbed, the whale wanders at will here and there, moving with ponderous ease and grace. In the flurry, his movements become jerky and awkward, and his course is invariably in a circle. If made aware of the presence of a boat, the uninjured whale dives to avoid it. The flurried whale dashes along regardless of what may be in his path, unconscious of all about him. The unwounded whale, even though running at his best, remains but a moment or two on the

surface, and then settles away under the water. The flurried whale is never for an instant hidden from sight. The one is a harmless animal, anxious to keep out of your way; the other is a maddened brute, fearing and caring for nothing.

In my opinion, when based upon any facts at all, many of the stories about fighting whales have originated from contact with flurried animals; and it is at least doubtful whether even old sperm bulls ever voluntarily court a conflict with men.





CHAPTER XVIII

DUST AND NEGROES

A FEW weeks after we had stowed away the last of our oil, robbed of all its brilliancy, and stripped even of straggling rays, the sun shone in the heavens a mere crimson ball; yet the sky was cloudless. As it hung about us, still and lifeless, the very air was red. The decks, the rigging, everything and everybody, were coated with an impalpable, reddish powder. The sea itself was tinted with the hue.

“What’s this stuff, Jack?” I inquired.

“I’ll be goll darned if I know. Looks an’ smells like a brickyard, don’t it?”

Frank was standing near us and volunteered: “The ol’ man says it’s dust blown off the great African desert. Yeh know we hain’t more ’n ’bout four hundr’d miles from the coast, here.”

I suggested that even that distance was a good ways for dust to come without the aid of a strong wind, and that we were more likely to be a mile from shore than so many hundred.

“ It does float that far, though,” Frank insisted. “ Mr. Bowman was sayin’ this mornin’ that the last time he was along here they was nigh ’bout choked with the stuff before they got so fur in as we are.”

After that, the atmosphere became more and more charged with its burden of dust, until the sun no longer made its way through, even as a ball of fire. If there was any wind, it was confined to regions far above our masts, and we were compelled to submit for a number of weeks to this scourge of dirt.

On voyages such as ours, the sun and the stars are the sole guides of seamen, and we were soon lost in the haze. In a general way we knew where we were, but more precise information was deemed desirable. A storm was liable to come up and send us upon a rock-bound shore; or, in the darkness of some night, we were liable to drift to land. It was no matter for immediate or much worry, but we all felt that more definite knowledge of our whereabouts would be better.

We had been drifting about in this condition several weeks, when a craft was seen through the dust a short distance from the brig, and the captain lowered his boat to secure information from the strangers.

“ We don’t want to git fur away in this stuff,” the captain cautioned. “ Git away lively, boys.”

So we bent to the oars with might and main until we came near enough to make out a long canoe, filled from end to end with naked black men, every one of whom was doing his utmost to paddle away from us.

“ Them fellers seem a bit scared — guess they think we ’re after some on ’em for meat. The’ don’t look ’s if the’ know much; but we ’ll talk to ’em, anyhow. Put me ’longside of ’em, boys,” ordered the captain.

A few more long strokes brought us within hailing distance of the negroes.

“ Aho-o-o-oy,” the captain bawled.

Except that the paddles in the canoe were plied with greater vigor than before, there was no response to this hail.

“ Darn ’em, the’ be shy, for a fact. Put me up closter, boys.”

For a minute, our boat fairly flew over the waves, rapidly overhauling the canoe, and the captain again shouted:

“ Aho-o-o-o-oy. Hullo, there—savve——”

What manner of instruction in English was about to be given by the captain, we never knew, for, as one man, those darkies stood up in their places, and the air was full of spears flying toward our boat.

The roll of the canoe probably disconcerted the aim of the savages or some of us must have been



"THE AIR WAS FULL OF SPEARS FLYING TOWARD OUR BOAT."

THE AIR WAS FULL OF SPEARS FLYING TOWARD OUR BOAT.

hurt. As it was, the missiles all fell short of our boat, but the captain yelled to us:

“ Stern all,” as if a whale had been there, and as we backed away muttered audibly: “ Them fellers would n’t know where we be if we was to ask ’em, probably.”

The negroes once more took to their paddles; and, greatly to the disgust of Jim and the rest of the boys in the boat, we headed about for the brig.

“ Ef I ’d a be’n cap’n, we ’d a tried ’em a whack,” Jim afterwards confided to me. “ The blamed sneaks, comin’ at us that way, when we was goin’ to ’em civil. Hang it! Dummed if it did n’t look as if we was afraid on ’em, and was runnin’ away!”





CHAPTER XIX

PIE—WATER—BANANAS

IT was almost midnight, and, the truth compels the confession, I was fast asleep leaning over the wheel at my post, for there was nothing better to be done there, when some one whispered in my ear:

“ Tom—Tom—say, Tom, don’t yeh want a piece o’ *pie* ? ”

Did I want pie!

I had not the least doubt but that it was nothing more than a dream. No such notion could enter the brain of man as at that hour and place to offer me pie. Pie no longer came to us in our den. The canned mince meat and the dried apples and peaches were all running low, and the cabin table must never want for pie.

From my babyhood I had been raised on pie. Pie at morn, pie at noon, pie at night. Pie—year in and year out, every day of every month, with never a Sunday omitted, from the time I was old enough to chew it until the day I had left my home, I had

been fed on pie, and now for weeks I had been constantly longing for pie, pie, pie,—pie that never came.

Of course it could be nothing but a dream.

“ *No!* I *don't* want a piece of pie,” I declared vehemently.

“ Oh, I thought mebbe yeh did! Wa-al, if yeh don't want it, I guess I c'n eat it myself,” said Frank, evidently hurt.

As he was turning away, I seized his arm, now wide awake. “ Goodness, Frank, if it really *is* pie, don't take it off, but give it to me quick.”

“ It 's nothin' only dried apple — don't b'lieve it 'll be good for yeh, anyhow,” he said, tantalizing me.

“ I 'd eat it if it was made of horse feet,” I declared. “ Here, give it here, won 't yeh ? ”

“ Oh, no! ‘ I *don't* want a piece o' pie,’ ” he mimicked. “ Not muchee, yeh don't. I kinder like pie myself, jest a little bit,” he continued, raising the morsel as if to bite it.

I snatched it greedily from his hand. “ Mince pie!” I exclaimed, under my breath. “ And, as I live, there 's a *raisin* in it.”

“ I 'll have to report yeh, Tom, for usin' disrespectful language to y'r superior officer. I said that was dried apple pie, and here you be sayin' 't ain't. If that ain't mutiny, what d' yeh call it ? ”

he chuckled. Then, lowering his voice, and speaking more seriously: "But don't yeh blab, not even to *Jack*. Yeh know I can't swipe victuals for all the boys. If yeh keep y'r mouth shet, and don't dream o' y'r grammer, mebbe it 'll happen ag'in some time."

Thus was a kind of vandalism instituted on board that continued all the time I remained on the brig, either not discovered or winked at by the captain.

"Hope we 'll git out o' this some time," said Frank a moment later. "It 's putty slow bisness, ain't it. Do yeh know, it 's six weeks this blessed day sense we 've b'en without a whiff o' fresh air. Why, if we 'd only saved this plaguey dust, we might have had a watermelon patch on here by this time."

"Hullo, what 's this!" A cool breeze brushed my face softly, and the foretopsail, the only bit of canvas we had spread, was taken aback.

"Make sail here, boys," cried Frank, cheerfully.

By the time sail had been made and the brig headed on her course to the southwest, the bell tinkled the signal for calling the other watch.

As we awoke the next morning in the forecastle, the water was rustling on the planks outside, and an occasional shock and splashing of spray told us of a whitecapped sea and stirring wind. In the east the reddish-brown haze still obscured the sun, but

in the west the sky was clear. The waves were again blue and fray-tipped, and we were dashing along at the best gait of the brig. Once more we were alive. The men, the brig, the water, the sky — all seemed newly awake. The dead, warm air, the dull red sky, the slow, sleepy roll had given place to brightness and freedom. Eyes that had been listless and dreamy shone with mirth and fire. A good stiff breeze had come and our hearts danced with the brig. I do not know how long it was after that before the faint cobweb in the sky marked for us the outline and extent of another island ahead. Whenever it was, it brought every man of us into the rigging, whooping and shouting his applause. The wind was still fresh and fair, and on that same day we dropped anchor close to shore.

“ They ’ve got the best water here to be found on the coast,” the captain told us, and we cheered once more.

“ Ye-ah, an’ about the wust fevers goin’, too,” the mate suggested as a damper. “ Guess it ’ll be all right though, if we don’t git the night air,” he added.

We had come to anchor in a mere indentation of the shore line in shoal water upon a sort of shelf making out from the island. The surf could be heard from our deck tumbling in upon a long, white beach opposite the brig, while on the left great

sheets of foam were constantly shooting into the sky, and a booming roar suggested the rocky ledge beneath the waves. There was nothing like a harbor here and we knew the ocean swell would make it difficult for us to land; but there were trees, and red, blue, yellow, purple, every imaginable shade and hue of foliage and flower, with birds fluttering in mid-air. There was also the sandy beach and the bare brown earth. It was land—a land wild and rugged; a land filled with deadly miasms; a land peopled with naked barbarians; a land inhabited by venomous reptiles and untamable beasts; a land teeming with horrors for the white man, blistered with heat, tormented with insects, pestered with vermin, and festering with garbage—but withal, dear to our eyes, for it was still land.

We could see no town, but a group of negroes lounged on the beach awaiting our coming, and the captain ordered his boat.

Without aid from shore, though the beach be smooth like the one we were now approaching, it requires an expert to land a boat safely through the surf. We were provided with both the expert and the aid, however, for the captain was experienced in such matters, while the negroes ran out knee-deep into the water to assist us.

When within a few feet of the breaking rollers, we rested to await the proper wave, and then, lay-

ing to our oars, sent the boat scurrying in on to the beach between two rows of darkies standing there to meet us. The next moment they had carried the boat with its crew still in place high and dry up the shore.

These were not hostile savages such as we had come upon higher up the coast, but rollicking, fun-loving men, whose faces beamed with good humor as they bore us along over the sand.

As we leaped out of the boat, my eyes caught a glimpse of a streamlet trickling and gurgling down the steep sides of a bluff near by; and within five seconds, oblivious of all else, my face was buried in a pool at the foot of the bank.

Here was water that needed no preparation of mind or body or cup for its use; a beverage that was pure, delicious, odorless, free from slime, almost cold; a refreshing draught poured out upon the sand by the earth for all men. The water on the brig had reached the vilest stage of filthiness short of the jelly described by the mate. Its odor was abominable; its warmth nauseating. For months we had held our breaths while we gagged and gulped down the horrible mixture. Now, I held my breath and drank and drank and drank, then caught another breath and still drank on.

“ My—*my*—MY! that 's good,” I shouted, after my stomach would take no more.

“ Bet y’r boots,” the other boys all agreed.

Although this drink was of nature’s own brewing, the captain with sufficient reason thought it best to obtain the consent of some person in authority before attempting to fill his casks with it. Men have in all ages appropriated Heaven’s bounties to themselves to the exclusion of other men, and these barbarians would now claim the right to tax us for the privilege of taking this water.

It would have been folly for us to resist this piece of impudence, and the captain set about the discovery of the potentate to whom his petition must be addressed.

Like Jack, the captain was sparing of his English when talking with foreigners.

“ Me want water,” he announced.

A show of enamels and a merry twinkling of eyes made up the sole response.

“ Me take ’im cask shore — fill up,” he resumed, pointing first to the pool and then to the brig.

At this, beckoning to us to follow, one of the darkies sidled away to a path leading up from the beach into the bushes, and, with a host of islanders of both sexes and all ages and conditions, especially of undress, we went along inland.

A short walk brought us to the town in which the governing chief was living. It was a small collection of huts, maybe thirty of them in the huddle,

each shaped liked the tepee of an American Indian, and built of slight poles fastened together with grass at the top.

In this climate no fires were needed in the huts, hence no holes were left above for the escape of smoke. A small triangular opening on one side served as a door; the floors were of smooth beaten earth; and, except for a rude bench upon which was tacked a piece of roughened metal for grating roots, there was no furniture—not even a bed of straw or hay.

The dress of the negroes was principally notable for its absence. The greater number of the men wore nothing but clouts. A few had dressed themselves for this occasion in fragments of hats, coats, pantaloons, and even shoes, which they had secured from other seamen who had visited the island; but not one of them showed up with a complete suit, while several could muster only a single shoe. The women were more dressy. Many of them wore a short cotton skirt of some gaudy color suspended from the waist, and some had adorned their heads with red cotton handkerchiefs wound on as turbans, while a few added sashes made by tying several handkerchiefs together. The children of both sexes were all stark as when born.

The hut of the chief was rather more pretentious than those of his subjects, in that it was square,

open on two sides, built of larger poles, with a flat roof, and rudely thatched with dried grass. We found him under this hut, lying in a hammock suspended from the posts of two corners.

As we approached him, the great man seemed to be reading a book — a primer such as Yankee children were poring over at home that very day. How the book came to be there we never knew. It was there, however, and so interested was this mighty man in its contents as he held it wrong side up that the captain was obliged to repeat his “Ahem — *ahem* — AHEM!” and follow it by a vigorous blowing upon his nose before the primer so much as shook.

At last, when this sham of royalty had been sufficiently played, the chief turned a pair of dull black eyes upon us, and, grinning hospitably at the captain, came forward to welcome him.

This chief was the most superbly built man I have ever seen. Fully seven feet tall, with his broad shoulders, muscular limbs, shining skin, and magnificent teeth, but for the dirt that hung in scales upon him, and his brutish, unintelligent face, he would have looked worthy of the kingly office. As it was, standing there in his huge proportions, his woolly hair slightly tinged with gray, and his broad nose and thick lips giving him the appearance of some great ape, he was far from attractive to look upon.

Like the rest of the tribe, the chief was dressed in holiday attire.

“ He ’s full-rigged, and got ev’ry rag set,” Jack said on the side.

A navy cap failed to cover his head; a brass cross glittered at the end of a string on his naked breast; a pair of pantaloons threatened to burst at every seam; and ten monstrous toes stuck out beyond his shoes. Otherwise he was clothed in nothing but grease and dirt.

He had undoubtedly rigged himself in this uncomfortable fashion for our benefit; and the play with the primer was part of the performance set out by him on the coming of every ship to his land.

“ Me cap’n ship. Come water. Me take it ? ” the captain commenced.

The big man grinned more broadly before asking:

“ How much give ? ”

“ What want ? ”

“ Coat.”

The captain nodded his assent.

“ Knife,” the chief continued.

“ Ye-ye-as,” rather doubtfully.

“ Rope ”—the negro extended his arms wide to show the length required.

The captain shook his head dubiously, but indicated a shorter length. “ No more,” he declared.

“ Huh ? ” There was an unpleasant grin on the big man’s face now.

The captain took from his pocket a large red handkerchief and offered it to the chief. The broad face softened, grew bright, and the character of the grin was changed.

“ Uh—huh. Good,” the king announced.

This completed the bargaining and we were at liberty to help ourselves to water.

The mates had been left on board with orders to break out and bring ashore the water casks, and, while we waited for them to come, we roamed at will on the island.

There was little to entertain us in the village. Its society was unattractive to most of us and the heat, back from the shore, was intolerable. So we soon gathered on the beach again, where we walked about picking up shells or lolled on the soft sand, watching the antics of the native youngsters in the surf.

It is a dangerous feat for a man to make his way from shore out through the ocean surf, but the boys and not a few of the girls of this place made a sport of it, plunging in at the proper moment, and appearing on the other side of the rollers like ducks.

If we had possessed the skill to pass through the surf in safety, none of us would have ventured, from fear of the sharks we knew abounded in these



" THERE WAS AN UNPLEASANT GRIN ON THE BIG MAN'S FACE."



waters. But the negroes showed no fear of attacks of that kind, and were not molested.

In the meantime, while the boys and girls were shouting and laughing upon the tops of the waves, the older men and women were arriving upon the beach, bringing with them back-loads of fruits — bananas, cocoanuts, limes, and some others, the names for which escape my memory, for which we traded red, yellow, and blue cotton handkerchiefs and similar trinkets, previously given out to us by the captain for the purpose.

At last the mates came with their casks, and, assisted by the negroes who swam out to them, got them ashore without mishap. Aided by so many willing hands, we soon had the casks filled with fresh water, after which, having secured them well together, we rolled them back down the beach. Then we passed our boats through the surf once more and, still assisted by the natives, managed to tow the casks through the rollers and out to the brig.

We had spent a delightful day, and, besides adding to the happiness of many a female heart by the bestowal of personal adornments, had secured a supply of excellent water and considerable fruit, at a total expense of a rough sailor coat, a common sheath knife, a short second-hand warp, and a few dozen worthless trinkets, taking away with us the hearty good-will of the people we had visited.

As the sun sank behind the hills of the island that evening, we hove the anchor aweigh, and the brig turned her head from the shore. The next morning we had left beyond sight the little island and its people forever.

The island we thus visited was one of a group lying off the coast of what was then Senegambia, a group often visited at that time by whaling vessels, but not set down upon the school atlas I had with me. If it possessed a name, it was not mentioned among us, and I do not now know what it was.





CHAPTER XX

THE GIANT SKATE

FOR several weeks after leaving the island last mentioned we cruised in its vicinity. The weather was charming, whales were known to resort in the region, and there was no good reason for hastening on. Indeed, before finally starting on another long cruise, it was the intention of the captain to land upon at least one more island of the group.

On the third day out from the island, the glare of the sun becoming painful to my eyes, I cast them down nearer the brig than was our custom, when they were riveted upon an enormous fish moving toward us immediately under the surface of the waves.

"What in blazes is that?" I inquired of Jim, pointing to it.

"The 's a big sea devil right aboard of us," Jim shouted to the captain below us.

"Wa-al, what of it? We don't want nuthin' o' him," was the curt reply, as the captain continued

his beat, scarcely deigning to look toward the fish.

"May n't I lower for 'm, suh?" Jim called, eagerly.

"Not by a gol darn sight," was the prompt rebuff.

So we were obliged to stand and look down upon the creature, while he swam rapidly up to the brig, stopped in evident surprise at the obstruction in his pathway, sheered and crossed our bow so close to us that a man might easily have dropped from the bowsprit on to his broad back.

In shape he was much like the ace of diamonds, but in color he was a glossy coal black, except as his thin side fins, curling with his movements or twisted up by the sea, exposed glimpses of gleaming white. Two eyes, each as large as an ordinary dinner-plate, were set six feet or more apart on the top of his pointed head, and stared coldly at us while he deliberately inspected the brig. A huge fin-like projection on each side of his nose gave an odd appearance to that end of the fish, while a narrow tail ending in a point added something like fifteen feet to his total length. Otherwise he looked like a charcoal diamond having nearly twenty feet of space between his points all the way round.

Aside from an easy undulatory movement of his tail, the creature seemed to glide smoothly along without special effort, rising and falling upon each

wave. He swam rather rapidly until he saw the vessel, when he paused to survey us, resuming his pace without apparent fear of being attacked. It would have been easy enough for us to have overtaken him in our boats, and the most of us were keenly disappointed upon the refusal of the captain to allow Jim to go down.

In the torrid zone the air becomes stuffy and hot below decks, and both officers and men prefer the open deck, where much of their time in the evenings is spent telling stories under the stars. Our captain seldom joined in general conversations, and more rarely still joined in telling yarns, although he liked to listen to them; but the occurrences of the afternoon had stirred up an old recollection within him, and that night he commenced by asking Jim:

“ Did yeh ever tackle one o’ them fellers we saw to-day ? ”

“ No, but I ’d a blamed well liked to ’ve done it, though,” said Jim, with a spice of bitterness in his tone.

As was his habit when ill-pleased, the captain gripped his lips hard and sat in silence for some minutes, before beginning again:

“ The time was when I felt that way myself. But, Jim, we have n’t any more men, nor any more boats, than we need aboard here; and I was n’t quite ready to spare any of ’em to-day. *I did* set

in a boat that tackled one of them fellers one time, and I hain't had no hankerin' after 'em sence."

The captain stretched himself upon the rail, with one arm resting over the gunwale of his boat; Mr. Bowman laid himself out on the raised house over the cabin and Jim composed himself on a coil of rope, and sat with his knees clasped between his palms, ready for the story. All three of them lit their pipes, after which I stood at the wheel and listened.

"The secont big thing I ever saw at sea was one o' them old sea devils, and, more by accident than any other way, we got into a great scrape with 'im; but we did n't git out that way, not by a dummed sight.

"We'd been cruisin' 'round the Western Islands quite a spell, without seein' nuthin' bigger 'n a porpus, when one day we raised a school o' cows, like the one we run amongst t' other day—the first sperm whales I ever set eyes on. We got in amongst 'em putty handy, and the mate struck one on 'em. I was pullin' the after oar in the ol' man's boat then ——"

"Do yeh hear that, Tom — do yeh hear that?" interrupted Mr. Bowman. "If yeh stick to it, yeh 'll git to head a boat yit."

The captain smiled his approval and went on with his story:

"Wa-al, anyway, that was what I was doing in them days — pullin' the after oar.

“ Soon ’s the mate got fast, ev’ry blamed fluke was h’isted, and there we sot waitin’ for ’em to come up ag’in.

“ We must have set there ten minutes — mebbe longer — when all to once there was black skin showin’ right ’longside the boat so clost you could have touched it with y’r hand.

“ The boat-steerer—guess you know ’im, Macy—’t was old Joe Taber. He lived up your way. Got to be master afterwards, and is livin’ on ’is int’rest, I’ve been told. Guess yeh know ’im, don’t yeh ? ”

“ Ye-ah. Sailed with him six year — d’oughter know ’im,” responded Mr. Bowman.

“ Wa-al, anyway, when Joe saw that black skin he did n’t wait for no orders, but ups and lets both irons go chug to the poles. He wa’n’t no hand to wait for orders, Joe wa’n’t; and when he thought he was nigh enough to a whale to hit ’im, he always slammed away for keeps. If he was goin’ to hit a *man*, yeh never heard a word out of *him*, but the fust thing that feller knew he got it smack in the face. So jest as soon as he saw that skin, kerchug went both irons into it, without any fuss.

“ Wa-al, now! mebbe yeh think we wa’n’t in for some fun in about a jiffy, hey! ’T wa’ n’t a secont after them irons had gone afore the old man caught on to what Joe had done, and he commenced cussin’ a livin’ streak at Joe for tanglin’ us

up with an old skate fish right amongst a lot o' whales.

" Now Joe knew a hanged sight better 'n the old man did jest what was likely to come out of the mess—he 'd tackled one o' the critters afore, and the old man had n't. ' Do your jawin' later, cap'n,' says Joe, sharp like. ' If yeh want to live any longer, look after y'r boat jest now.'

" The old man's mouth set to twitchin', but that wa' n't no time for chin music, and he saw 't wa' n't. That old sea devil was spread out there right alongside of us, and the minute them irons sank into 'im he commenced slidin' in under the boat, and before the old man could git any sort of swing on his oar, the blamed thing was stickin' out seven or eight foot on both sides, plum under us.

" That wa' n't so much to worry about, mebbe, for yeh know they 're most as flat as a board, and Joe was jabbin' his lance down through 'im ev'ry which way; but the old devil give a kind o' flop, all to once, and quicker 'n two shakes of a lamb's tail one o' them danged corners come flappin' in over the gun'ale and knocked the life clean out of a Pochugee right back o' me, and come mighty clost to upsettin' us right there.

" 'T wa' n't gittin' a mite funny about that time for me, nuther. Yeh see that Pochugee was our tub oarsman and was settin' right behind me when

the critter come kerflummux on to 'im, and the darned hide flopped and slid down on the back of my neck—uh-uh-ugh-huh! but it did feel so dummed co-o-o-old and *slimy*! Um-m-m-m-m, jiminy cats! I hain't what you can call *narvous*, gen'rally speakin', but yeh c'n bet I felt shaky enough right then.

“ The old man got his oar in an' swung us off, but then we got a clip from the tail o' the critter, o' suthin', that mighty near stood us end ways—ev'ry last man in the boat was jest tumbled helter-skelter down inter the stern sheets, all in a bunch.

“ About that time the second mate got down to us. He 'd seen we was in some trouble and come to help us out of it. The fust thing he knew that old devil was headed lickity split for *his* boat, and he did n't git out of the way a mite too sudden, nuther. He was so thunderin' big an' clumsy—that old skate was—that he could n't turn very quick—not so quick as we could turn the boats, but he had the all-firedest way of comin' at yeh crab fashion that yeh ever did see. As A'nt Sally used to say, it was mighty tryin' to the narves, sure.

“ When he missed the second mate, the critter turned and come for *us* ag'in. Joe sent two lances plum through 'im as he come, but they did n't stop him a bit—he did n't seem to mind them any, and he kept on comin' jest the same. The old man

worked his steerin' oar lively, but 't was nip and tuck—the critter missed us by jest a scratch and that was all—he was mighty nigh to hippin' us that time.

“ We 'd probably made the old feller sick still, if it had n't been that the old man swung his oar out to swing the boat jest as the critter was slidin' by. Yeh know them fellers have a mouth on 'em that opens somewhere four or five foot back and under their noses — opens right square crossways, they say—never saw one myself—must be an old welter of a mouth, too. Anyhow, jest as he was slidin' past, the old man stuck his oar right in the way o' that nose, and the critter slid over and grabbed it and yanked it clean off the boat—jest ripped the whole plaguey business square off, and sent the old man flyin' in the air right atop o' the old devil, and there we was.”

As the story had proceeded, the voice of the captain had become louder and louder, and now he left the rail on which he had been lying, and paced rapidly back and forth on the deck as he continued :

“ In another second the old skate was after us ag'in, and there was no such thing as dodgin' that time. We saw we 'd got to meet him fair, and no gittin' out of it.

“ Joe tossed a boat-spade to me and told the bow oarsman to git a lance—the midship oarsman

had one already; and so we stood there waitin' for that thing to come at us. He did n't keep us long waitin' for 'im, nuther. You 'd oughter seen them dummed eyes of his 'n. By ginger, they jest paralyzed me for a second, 'til my wits got to runnin' ag'in. They was bigger 'n dinner-plates and the coldest, starin'est, dumdest things to look into yeh ever saw—they beat any snake's eyes yeh ever heard tell of. Yeh jest could n't keep y'r own eyes off of 'em.

“ Wa-al, he lifted that peeked nose of his clean above the water and made a bee-line for our boat. We waited 'til he was within ten foot of us, and then Joe yells:

“ ‘ Put 'is daylights out, boys! ’

“ At that, we all let drive with what we had at one o' them skylights, and the chances are we all hands hit what we aimed at; but we was too late to stop the critter's headway, and on he come. In less time than it takes to think, that boat was goin' over, and the next minute I felt that old devil rubbin' along right over me, and expected to be crunched in that durned mouth o' his 'n, as much as ever I looked for anything in my life. By George, I thought my time *had* come sure enough! I never thought I 'd see daylight ag'in.”

Here the captain halted and wiped his forehead.

“ By gum, it makes me sweat now, jest thinkin' about it!

“ Wa-al, while I was waitin’ to feel myself swal-
lered right there, the thing slipped along off of me,
and up I come, and the boys hauled me in aboard
the second mate’s boat.

“ I dunno whether we killed the thing or not ; but
that was the last we saw of him—probably he ’d had
enough of us and went about his business, and I hope
he went it blind. Anyway, when we come to turn
our boat over right side up, ev’ry bit of the whale
line was gone out of it, and we never found the buoy.
If he had been dead, pretty likely that buoy would
have been bobbing ’round there somewheres near
us. It wa’ n’t, so I guess he must have carried it off.

“ The Pochugee sunk when the boat upset, so we
did n’t have to bury *him* ; and the ol’ man come
out all right, outside of a sprained wrist. All told,
we thought we come out of it putty slick—we was
mighty lucky it wa’ n’t no wuss.

“ Now, mebbe yeh can understand why I wa’n’t anx-
ious to let yeh go after that one this afternoon, Jim,”
the captain concluded, turning upon his boat-steerer.

“ That ’s all right, suh,” Jim replied, shrugging
his shoulders, “ but I jest wish yeh ’d let me try
’im once, all the same.”

The captain wheeled with an impatient gesture
and went down into the cabin, sending back at Jim
a parting shot :

“ Nothin’ but a whalin’ ’ll ever give a fool sense.”



"IN LESS TIME THAN IT TAKES TO THINK THE BOAT WAS GOIN' OVER."

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CHAPTER XXI

FRENCH PETE

A FEW days later land was sighted over the bow. It was a small, low island of the same group as the one we had visited for water, and some hours afterwards we dropped anchor within a snug cove opposite a rude wooden wharf, beside which was moored a small sloop and several dugout canoes. A frame dwelling-house, the first sign of civilization we had seen since leaving Teneriffe behind us, stood upon a knoll overlooking the water.

The captain ordered his boat lowered at once and we rowed him to the wharf. A white man met us on the pier, who hailed us first in French, but immediately changed to English, which he spoke fluently, with a peculiar accent, marked particularly by a tendency to convert our "w" into "v," and to emphasize the sound of "s."

"I am very glad to see ze gentlemen and to welcome zem to my island. It vill afford me much pleazure to ezcort you to ze house, gentlemen," he

said, speaking the words at the rate of three hundred a minute, and accompanying them by a profusion of rapid gesticulations such as only a Frenchman can make without seeming ridiculous. In him it was natural and sincere—just what was to be expected of him. Any other mode of greeting would have been disappointing to us.

“How are yeh, Pete!” shouted the captain, grasping the Frenchman’s extended hand, and working it like a pump-handle. “How are yeh, old boy? By gum! yeh don’t look a day older ’n yeh did the last time I was here—a little gray, mebbe, but not a day older ’n yeh was then.”

Pete suffered his hand to be squeezed and his arm to be pumped while he scanned the captain’s face curiously for a minute. But, finding no clue to a solution of his difficulty there, he was obliged presently to confess:

“I am sure it affords me ze greatest pleazure, but vill it be impertinent if I inquire ven it vas I had ze honor to make zis acquaintance?”

“Not a bit of it, old man—not a bit of it,” the captain declared, still pumping at the arm. “Not a bit. No wonder yeh did n’t know me. Why, if ’t was a minute, it was twenty year sense you set eyes on me. You was raisin’ that house—come to look at it, though, I guess ’t wa’ n’t that one either—but you was raisin’ some house, and we helped

yeh put the frame up. Don't yeh r'member me, now ?”

“ To be sure, so it vas—to be sure, to be sure. It all comes back to me. To be sure, to be sure. We had some great sport that day -- to be sure, to be sure. But you must have been very young then, sir ?”

“ Wa-al, for a fact, I wa' n't cap'n then, but I 'd got fur enough along to be steerin' a boat, though,” the captain explained.

“ Pardon me—it is so very long ago, you vill pardon me if I do not remember it.”

Then the Frenchman took us all in with one graceful sweep.

“ You are velcome to ze island, gentlemen.”

The mere words fail to convey the warmth of feeling they aroused. We felt that all there was on the island was at our disposal—that our coming was in reality a joyous thing to this man.

The captain, as well as the rest of us, was visibly affected by the kindness of our reception, although his words seemed rude and inappropriate.

“ By gum, Pete, you 've made quite a place here sense I was 'round, hain't yeh ?” he said.

The “ place ” consisted of a group of banana trees, a grove of cocoanuts, an open field of yams and sweet potatoes, and the house, of which more will be said.

Pete made no reply to the remark of the captain, but again turned to the rest of us. He was certainly a genuine democrat, for of all the men we met on the voyage, whether among barbarians or civilized people, he alone refused to make any distinction between officers and common sailors. To him we were all his fellows, and he took each of us by the hand there on the pier with the same polite suavity and as much apparent respect as he had taken the hand of the master, and ended by a general invitation for us to accompany the captain with him to the house to be presented to the family there.

If we had then left the island there would have been nothing of our visit to relate other than pleasant recollections; but, if the tale is to be kept to the truth, the character so far given to Pete must be somewhat lowered. So far as nature makes or maintains one, this Frenchman was undoubtedly an affable gentleman; but long years of association with a degraded race had made him oblivious to many things that left their impressions on me.

Accepting the invitation extended to us, we all went to the house, the captain and Pete chatting and laughing gaily together in advance, and we—three foremast hands—following behind.

As it is with stage costumes, so it was with this house—distant inspection would have been better.

As it stood elevated above the field and silhouetted on the sky, when seen from the brig the house was quite imposing. It covered a good deal of ground, and looked to be much higher than it really was. It was in truth a queer bundle of odd additions to what had been originally a small, square, one-story shack. A long, roofed porch, raised four or five feet above the ground and supported by six hewn posts, stood in front of the original house. This porch was reached by ascending six or seven rickety wooden steps. A pig-pen in which were a few razor-backed hogs was under one end of the porch, and under the other end was a lattice-worked hen-coop.

A dozen or more young pigs ran squealing from the path as we marched up to the steps; and Pete found it necessary to "shoo" some chickens from the porch before asking us to be seated. All about, the premises were dirty, and the combination of odors was quite as remarkable and intolerable as that of our own fore-castle on the brig.

On the way from the pier we had been surrounded by naked children of all shades of coloring ranging from coal black to cream white. There were also a number of young men and girls standing about in front of the house who exhibited an equal variety of color, but a less complete state of undress; besides a good many older men and women of pure

African blood. All displayed faultless teeth, and nearly all greeted us with shining, mirthful eyes and grinning mouths. We were as surely objects of curiosity to these people as they were to us, but there was a disposition on both sides to friendliness that relieved the situation of all embarrassment.

The captain and Pete betook themselves to a bench at one end of the porch, while we seated ourselves upon the steps leading up from the ground, not that we would not have been free to follow Pete, but we stood in respectful awe of our master.

A moment later a door in the centre of the building was flung open upon the porch, and, with a queer, good-natured cackle, Pete's wife advanced and shook hands with the captain; then she came to us, and repeating the cackle, shook each of us cordially by the hand.

She was very large and very fat, and dressed—well, she was scarcely dressed at all. A red bandana encircled her woolly head; a short skirt, the color of which was lost in dirt, hung from the waist nearly down to her knees—that was all. It was a costume eminently suited to the weather and to the society in which she moved, but it was not becoming to a person of her size, condition, form, and make-up. Her lips were thick and prominent, her nose broad and flat, her skin shone with accumulated

grease, and she exhaled the odor of blended garlic and Africa. In color, she was a rather light mahogany.

Pete spoke some unintelligible words to her, and she went back into the house and presently returned with a tin pan full of milk, and a cocoanut dipper. The captain drank off a dipperful of milk eagerly—too eagerly, it seemed to me. Then the woman refilled the dipper and passed it to each of us in turn on the steps.

As my turn came to drink, a sudden nausea overwhelmed me, and I felt the cold perspiration breaking out upon my forehead. It was a most uncomfortable situation, but one that could not be helped.

Pete, whose quick, nervous, comprehensive glances were everywhere at once, sprang to my side.

“The gentleman is zeek,” he declared.

“I—I guess—I ’ll be—be—all right—in—in a—in a minute,” I gasped between gulps.

The captain kindly came to my assistance then. “He ’s got a mighty weak stomach. Guess she did n’t hit ’im quite right. He was sick a long time aboard. Fact is he come putty nigh to rilin’ me some. If you ’ve got some of that—*you* know—some o’ that stuff yeh fixed *us* off with. If yeh had jest a *leetle* of that to give him, he ’d come round ag’in, prob’bly.”

Pete took no notice of the apparent slur upon his wife, nor did she. He smiled most affably as he said:

“ Ah! To be sure—to be sure. He zall haf it. I think it vill make him feel much better. To be sure—to be sure.”

He spoke to one of the younger women standing in the group near the foot of the steps, and a few minutes afterwards she offered me a drink from another dipper. This smelled promisingly, and was drained greedily enough. Next to the water at the spring on the other island, it proved the most satisfying draught of my life. It was cool, fragrant, aromatic, and delicious to taste, but as alcoholic as most wines. Had I understood at the time it was offered that it was an intoxicating drink, nothing could have induced me to put it to my lips, for I had been trained to teetotalism from the cradle; but I knew only the pleasure it brought to my palate and the relief it brought from the nausea. The dipper must have contained half a pint, and I drank its contents to the last drop without taking breath.

Up to that moment ship coffee had been my most stimulating beverage, and the effect of the fermented sap upon me was marked and instantaneous. I found myself at once not only returning the sympathizing smiles of the girl who had given me the

drink, but of the hostess who had sickened me. Everything and everybody seemed suddenly transformed. The disgustingly filthy house and porch was a comfortable house and piazza; the dark, greasy boys and girls had become delightfully companionable. My sickness had gone, and I was ravenously hungry. I was not in fact very drunk, but was nearer so than I have ever been since.

In view of all the circumstances, I have never come to regret the mishap which thus befell me, although I have ever since avoided such drinks. The visit to that island would have been a wretched experience to me without it. As it was, the rest of the day was spent in a wild, hilarious romp, and I went on board feeling better for the fun.

This Frenchman had been on that island upwards of twenty years, and for all practical purposes was its ruler. So far as he knew, no other white man lived nearer to him than a hundred miles; and no one had ever disputed his right to hold the land. Once every year he took a sloop load of yams and sweet potatoes several hundred miles to Sierra Leone, and brought back with him such things as his family most needed. Besides his own children, who hovered about us in swarms, there were more than a hundred natives of the island, all of whom cheerfully submitted to his control and aided in cultivating his crops. He seemed contented with

his lot and happier than most wealthy men who reside in more favored communities.

At the request of our host, the captain had sent for the rest of the crew to come ashore; and, just before dark, we gathered at the wharf to take our leave. The stay on shore was to be limited to the day time, because of the supposed danger from fevers to unacclimated white men.

The canoes had been plying back and forth between the shore and the brig during all the hours of our visit, carrying bananas, cocoanuts, yams, and potatoes, that had been purchased at nominal prices by the captain; but our entertainment on the shore had been wholly free. We had been urged to take anything we found suited to our tastes; and besides filling ourselves with luscious fruit picked directly from the trees, many of the crew had absorbed large quantities of the native drink. After having once partaken of it, its seductive influence was simply irresistible, and everybody had indulged himself freely. Mr. Bowman was particularly unfortunate in this respect, and, when the time came for us to go on board the brig, hung back.

“ Gezz not. Zhish good 'nough. Yeh don't git me 'board—not by a d——n sight yeh don't. By gorry—by gorry, I shtay ri-right where I be, by gorry,” he announced.

The captain threw both his arms around the neck of his mate in an affectionate hug and coaxed :

“ Course, weesh all know thash — thash all right ’nough — course ’t is — thash all right fast ’nough. We don’t—we don’t shay—nothin’ ’gin that—course we don’t. Nobuddy—nobuddy can’t shay nothin’ ’gin that. But, darn it all, wha’—whash she ush—whash she ush stayin’ here ? Yeh can’t ketch no ile — don’t yeh she — yeh can’t git no ile — here — course not. Come — lesh go ’board.”

The mate was neither to be placated nor fooled, and, shaking the captain off, he insisted roughly :

“ Nope—nope—hain’t goin’ a dum step. Thish bes’ place — besh place yeh everzee — darn ’f go. Pete! — Pete!” he called, staggering toward the Frenchman. “ Pete, don’t yeh want a *mate* ? Shay, don’t yeh want a *mate* ? Bless y’r ol’ hide an’ tallur, Pete—ship me for mate—thash the ticket —ship me for mate, won’t yeh ? ”

Pete, who was himself affected by the day’s potations, now added his persuasions to those of the captain to induce the mate to go on board :

“ To be sure — to be sure, but she know — you know — you mus’ go ’board an’ get ze zings — you mus’ go ’board and bring away your *close*.”

“ No yeh *don’t* come thash,—yeh don’t come none o’ thash—not on me, yeh don’t. Wha’—whash she ush o’ *close* here ? Eh—eh ? — Whash

she ush o' close, I 'd like to know. No—no yeh don't. Whash she ush o' close here, I say ? ”

No satisfactory answer being forthcoming to this poser, which the mate continued to repeat over and over, the boys generally tried to persuade him to accompany us on board, until the captain, losing patience, ordered us to tumble him into the boat. A short, sharp struggle sufficed to stow the officer on the bottom of the boat at the stern, and we took him with us alongside. As we rowed out, he continued to bawl loud enough to be heard above the maudlin songs of the crew :

“ Shay — shay, boys — boys. Darn 'f I 'll go — besh place yeh ever she— Tra-la-la-la — shay — shay—whash she matter ? Hey ! hey, Cap'—got any o' thash—thash—thash—what—what—wha'—” and the voice was hushed in sleep.

And thus ended the most disgraceful day of the voyage.





CHAPTER XXII

A MONKEY—ART OF SCRIMSHAWING—A STORM

AFTER this we cruised for some days off the coast of Senegambia, now and then touching at some one of the islands and once upon the mainland, upon a series of pleasure trips. At least it now seems to me we had no legitimate object in staying there so long. We did take on a small quantity of wood at the last place we stopped at, but the fuel could as well have been obtained weeks before.

On one of the islands, after several unavailing attempts to capture a monkey ourselves, the captain purchased one from the natives, who while he remained with us afforded much amusement by his pranks. At first, he was allowed to roam at will over the vessel, but after he had let a number of halyards go by the run, and had been caught in the cabin stealing a pie, his exploits were limited to a small portion of the quarter-deck by means of a short line fastened to the stern railing and secured

to a broad leathern band encircling Jacko's waist. He was small, active, mischievous, and cross, but a general favorite with the crew, and probably would have arrived safely in the United States with the brig but for his unfortunate personal vanity. Soon after being confined to the stern of the vessel, Jacko acquired the habit of dropping himself over the railing in calm weather, where for hours together he would hang suspended a foot or two above the water, chattering, scolding, and blinking at his own image reflected up to him from the glass-like surface below. No harm would have come from this, but one day, before taking his usual drop, he must have untied his line, and thus have become the agent of his own drowning, for when we missed him, the entire line was gone.

After taking the monkey on board, we left the coast and a few weeks later were well out into the Atlantic and not far from the equator.

"Gosh, it 's hot! What 's become of all the air!" I complained one day.

Nye, who was sitting opposite me on his trunk, yawned and held out for my inspection a polished whale tooth upon which he had at odd times for several days been working. I took the tooth and examined it critically. Nicely engraved upon its smooth surface was the picture of a matron seated in a carved chair and holding a small boy on her

lap, while beside her a young girl knelt turning the leaves of a book that rested upon the boy's knees. A figured rug was on the floor and under the chair; a potted geranium sat on the sill of an open window; and some fleecy white clouds beyond completed the design—a home scene, skilfully worked out in bright water colors.

“That 's fine,” I declared, with genuine enthusiasm. “I wish I could do as well as that.”

“Lemme see yours.”

I gave a last rub with a coarse woollen rag upon my whale tooth and then submitted the work to him. It was not so elaborate as his engraving, but it represented many hours of patient scratching with the point of my penknife. He held it to the light, felt of its polished surface, turned it this way and that, and tossed it back to me. “You 'll learn—that 's putty good,” he said.

We spent much of our time during that month in “scrimshawing.” It was a fad, like the fads of shore to have its day and be laid aside for some new one. Not only were many whale teeth decorated by us with varying skill, but dozens of canes were made from slabs of bone sawed from the under jaws of the whales we had caught, and ornamented with pictures such as I have described.

These pictures were usually—not always—copied from some book or magazine on board. The picture

would be cut from the book and pasted on the surface to be adorned, after which its principal outlines would be pricked upon the tooth by means of a pin. Then the paper would be washed off and the picture engraved upon the tooth by a penknife, after which the water colors would be rubbed across the little slits in the bone until they were filled. The work was an agreeable relief from idleness and helped much to kill the dragging time.

While we were comparing the teeth, the bell tapped and we put them away, preparatory to going on duty.

For some days, the water had gleamed, glassy and unruffled, about us. The very air shone as it quivered over the decks. The sails hung limp, chafing against the booms and yards. Not a speck obscured the sky. The air that had been for hours sultry enough became suddenly stifling — dead.

It was my turn to stand at the wheel, and I went there. Jack was leaning over it in happy unconsciousness. I stepped to him and whispered in his ear:

“ I had just as soon go back. You don’t have to give this thing up, Jack, if you don’t want to.”

“ Huh—wha’—wha’s *that* ? ” Jack strained his eyes open and looked blankly at me.—“ No, I wa ’n’t nuther. I wa ’n’t asleep. I was jest kinder *restin’*, that ’s all,” he insisted.

“Of course you was, Jack. Anybody could see that with half an eye. Let me spell yeh awhile just for a change.”

“I vum, guess we ’ve got to the hot place ahead o’ time!” I heard him mutter as he went down off the quarter-deck to renew his dreams in the shade of the try-works.

The monotonous roll of the brig, combined with the intense heat in the dead air, soon rendered me as insensible as Jack had been. I do not know how long I had been asleep before I was roused by a step on the cabin stairs and rubbed my eyes open to see who was coming. It was the captain, and as he rushed on deck to scan the heavens, his face spoke of worry.

“Dunno, but I guess we ’re goin’ to ketch it,” he said, more to himself than to me.

My eyes followed his around the circle. From horizon to zenith and thence to the horizon again was nothing but flickering brightness.

In another moment, Mr. Bowman came up from the cabin, in his turn scanning the sky.

“Guess there ’s time enough to make things snug; but she ’s comin’ sure. Had n’t I best take in sail, sir?” he asked.

“Ye-ah. Reef ev’rything down close afore yeh furl ’em. They ’ll be handier to shake out bym-by. But take in ev’ry rag.”

"All hands take in sail," shouted the mate.

"Aye, aye, sir. All hands take in sail," roared Frank, who was in charge of the main-deck.

"Aho-o-o-oy! All-l-l-l hands on deck and take in sail," some one bellowed in the forecastle gangway.

In half a minute, the decks and rigging were swarming with the crew, every man hustling in obedience to some order.

"I'll tend to this. You go forrard and help," the captain said to me, assuming control of the wheel himself.

The "line" was near at hand, the crossing of which would make even us green hands salts, and we had become experts in handling sails. In less time than is required for telling it, every sail on the brig had been neatly furled and secured, and masts and spars were all as bare as they could be made without actually unbending the canvas.

I had helped furl the foretopsail. In my descent, casting my eye back, I saw a knot that was not well tied, and, after the others had all gone down, returned to make it right. As I finished retying the knot, I heard a rumbling noise from over the water, and a small white cloud appeared on the edge of the horizon. The rumbling quickly increased to a growl, then to a roar, deepening and strengthening each second, while the cloud kite

shot rapidly upwards followed by others, each in its turn darker than the one that preceded it; until in five seconds the whole western sky was hidden in darkness out of which came hideous noises, flashes, and shrieks. Then a huge black mass of cloud came swirling and bellowing down upon us.

I saw at once that we were "going to ketch it," and taking care to go down on the windward side hastened my descent. I had passed the short ladder under the foretop and was half-way down to the deck when a violent pressure from behind flattened me upon the rigging, where I lay held as in a vice looking straight down into the spray-flecked sea. The hurricane had struck us and the brig was on her beam ends.

The hissing howl of wind, the crashing peals of thunder, the vivid flashes of light, the chilling torrents of rain, the furious impetuosity of the onslaught combined to stun me, and only vague recollections of the next succeeding minutes have survived.

By the time I was again able to think the inertia of the brig had been partially overcome and she had commenced to move with the gale. As her hull yielded, the pressure upon her masts was lessened, the foreyard lifted from the waves, the bow gradually swung away on the blast, and slowly we righted until the vessel stood erect speeding

before the hurricane. As steady as an ice-boat skating in a park, we rushed over a perfect plane. The sea had become level as a pond. Even the usual swell had disappeared. The ocean itself had been stretched flat by the fierce blow, and nothing but sheets of flying foam marred its surface.

As the bow of the brig swung off with the wind, my position became too dangerous for calm observation of the water. While we lay side on to the wind, I could not have fallen without great effort; but as we turned and the gale came more and more from one side of me, all my strength was exerted to maintain my hold on the shrouds. For a few minutes it seemed as if I must be wrenched loose and blown into the sea; but with the gathering headway, the force of the wind against my side was diminished, and the descent was finally made in safety.

We were now going with the storm, and there was no difficulty in making my way back to the wheel.

On this, as on one other occasion to be related, the captain assumed the work of an ordinary seaman, rather than trust it to less skilful hands, and I found him still at the wheel when I reached it.

“ Shall I take her, sir ? ” I asked.

“ No, my boy. I guess I ’ll handle ’er a spell

yit. You might stand by though, and mebbe yeh 'll learn suthin'. Yeh never see nothin' like this, did yeh ?”

I admitted my lack of experience in such storms, and construing the captain's words to be an order to remain, stood on the opposite side of the wheel from him until the end of my turn, the wind howling and the rain pouring around us.

The lightning took its thunder on in advance of us, seeking new beings to terrify, and we were soon far behind listening to the boom, boo-oo-oom, boo-m-m-m, b-m-m-m, until even that could no longer be heard. The ocean quickly lost its flattened surface, and huge billows rose to chase the brig as she fled in a mad career. In place of the furnace of heated, dead air in which we had been roasting, we now shivered and shivered in a continuous shower bath. *The pitiless torrent pelted our faces, our necks, our hands, every exposed spot of our bodies, with stinging force, and sent its ice-cold streams behind our collars and down our backs, until our teeth chattered. All in all, that hour with the captain at the wheel was one of the most miserable I have ever spent.

A few minutes before the bell tapped for my relief from this torture, Mr. Bowman came and stood near us.

“ This might have be'n a pesky sight wuss,” he

remarked. "We 're headed right for the grounds, and gittin' there a-flukin'."

"Mebbe," the captain replied, rather grimly. "These darned things are suthin' like sperm whales, though — they veer. She 's swung clost to a p'int already, and more 'n likely she 'll be clean 'round afore mornin'."

"I don't suppose 't would do to heave 'er to, would it?" the mate rather suggested than inquired.

"No, I guess that 's too resky. There hain't no use takin' no chances here. If it lets up some bym-by, and she keeps veerin', mebbe we 'd best try it."

At eight o'clock that evening our watch was again on deck. The storm continued in full force, with the waves growing in height and fury, while the rain still poured its chill sheets upon us.

For the first hour, I paced back and forth, back and forth, across the forecandle deck on the forward lookout, glancing over the bow at each turn of my beat, while the deepening gloom crept upon us. I was now better dressed for the storm than before. An oilskin suit and tarpaulin hat afforded some protection from the wind and rain, but in spite of them the water soon found its way inside, and my teeth again clattered from the cold.

After the hour at the lookout, there was nothing for me to do but to seek shelter from the relentless

gale; and, in front of the try-pots, in front of the cook-house, in front of the masts, in front of the cabin, in turn I sought it, crouching and shivering, always pelted by the rain.

There seemed no escape from the torture to which we were subjected, and during the last hours of our watch, I stood out upon the most open part of the deck, doggedly taking note of the rushing, tumbling, raging, white foam-capped billows—decidedly less miserable than before. There, my mind forgot the sufferings of the body, and the minutes slipped along with the seething, tossing waves. I was now a looker-on at a wild race in which the brig and multitudes of demons were the steeds. The brig no longer stood upright and steady, but was hurled and tossed about, lifted and whirled upon the mighty cauldron leaping and surging about her. She was being driven—dodging and jumping, parrying and striking, seeming like a breathing thing—but yet driven helplessly along. It was thrillingly grand and awe-inspiring, surely; yet, benumbed with cold and wretched as we were, the sound of the bell summoning us away at midnight was most welcome.

“What’s the weather?” growled Jack, loath to crawl from his bunk.

“Hades multiplied,” I declared. “But get out of this and let me in,” I demanded.

"Thought hades was hot," he remarked, rolling out.

"So 't is, but you 'll find this hotter," grumbled Nye.

How comfortable this gloomy den had become! It was not now stuffy or too hot. The berth in which Jack had made place for me and the blankets in which I snuggled were luxurious, soft, and nice as I dropped into the realm of dreams amidst the playing of skyrockets, the booming of cannons, magically changed to the chipping of sparrows and the laughter of children, followed by the gentle floating away upon the still air as we never float elsewhere than in dreams, until the cry was resounding:

"Star-ar-ar-bud watch aho-o-o-oy."

"I 'll be kicked if we 've more 'n got down here," Nye shouted in answer to the call.

But we had been in our bunks full four hours, and Jack was standing by my berth waiting for his place.

"Come, come, Tom, hustle out o' that, will yeh," he growled. "Come, hurry up. I'm jest parb'iled, and that 's all there is about it. If hades hain't any warmer 'n 't is on deck, I'm goin' to speak for a berth in t'other place."

Hurling imprecations right and left, and at the brig in particular, our watches rolled out of their

bunks to dress, while the floor tipped, fell, rose, twisted, and rocked with a violence upsetting to the most practised sea-legs among us. Every plank, beam, and timber at our end of the brig was squeaking and groaning under the strain; and yet, since we were moving with the gale, the movements of the vessel, though hard to anticipate, were comparatively easy, smooth, and flowing. We had no liking for the deck, and hated to leave our bunks. The love of nature had never been developed in us at the study fire. We had little of the imagination that assumes to delight in such storms. The gale sang no carols for us; the ocean was peopled by no fancies. The wind only howled and shrieked; the ocean was nothing but water. The rain pelted and tormented us; the sea hankered for nothing but our hides. We were common sailors, preferring the warmth and comforts of our berths to exposure in any hurricane, be it never so grand or sublime. So we gripped our lips, donned our oil-skin suits, tied on our hats, and went on deck without a thought of poetical raptures in the storm.

It was four o'clock in the morning and dark. The red and green lights in the forerigging did little to dispel the gloominess of the scene. Around us was nothing but shadows of mountainous waves. The winds whistled and shrieked among the shrouds and stung our faces as it passed. The rain had

nearly ceased, but the blast-borne spray was searching as we pressed through it on our way aft.

At the wheel, I found the second mate and one of the Portuguese boys, and relieved them. Mr. Bowman had come up from the cabin and was waiting as I came to my post to learn whose turn had come to steer.

"Do you think you can keep her head off?" he asked of me.

"I can try, sir."

The compass was in front of us, lighted by the binnacle lamp, and showed that our course had shifted so much during the night that we were no longer headed for the desired whaling grounds. I glanced for an instant back at the phosphorescent lights gleaming in our wake, saw the great host of raging whitecaps madly chasing behind, admonishing me of the responsibility of my post, and then turned my whole mind to keeping the brig before the wind. The mate stood beside me a few minutes to make sure that I could do the work, and then went away.

A little later, the captain joined the mate and both came and looked at the compass.

"Suthin' 's got to be done," the captain declared.

"She 's a clipper, and stiff as they make 'em, but this is putty squally for 'er to lay to in," the mate counselled.

“Ye-ah—mebbe.” The captain paced a turn or two across the deck and then came back to the compass. “Lash ev’rything snug, and we’ll try it anyhow,” he said presently to the mate.

Mr. Bowman went forward to see that every movable thing was secured. The captain came and stood beside me, saying more to himself than to me:

“There ’s no use talking, she ’s jest *got* to stand it. I hain’t going to lose all we ’ve gained, taggin’ along on behind this thing — not by a darned sight. No, siree, she ’s got to stand it, that ’s all.”

The steel-gray clouds of dawn soon after lent their color to the waves, which piled high around us, hard, cold, awful, as befitted such foes.

“All ready, sir,” announced the mate.

“Then call all hands and make sail.”

“Aye, aye, sir. Call all hands and make sail,” roared the mate.

The order was repeated sharply by Frank and reiterated at the forecastle gangway by a foremast hand, until the sleepers in the bunks came rushing up.

I shall not attempt to repeat the commands that followed in quick succession, resulting in spreading to the wind a jib, a close-reefed foretopsail, and a small piece of the big mainsail. I was attending to my own duties and affairs at the wheel and probably

did not hear many of them at the time. While the sails were being set the captain busied himself lashing first me and then his own person to the steering-gear.

“ Most likely we ’ll git swashed some here,” he remarked to me.

When everything was ready, I heard the bugle notes of the mate and the hoarser cries of Mr. Brown summoning the men to the braces, and then came to me from the captain:

“ *Hard* aport.”

We spun the wheel around together and the bow turned from its course, while the yardarms and boom were braced and hauled home to suit the change.

As the gale struck the sails side on, the brig careened, dipping her foreyard again in the sea, and dashed ahead in a sudden leap.

It required our joint strengths to hold the wheel.

“ Hang to ’er,” the captain shouted to me, tugging with all his might at the spokes on the other side.

A very mountain of water was rising to windward, threatening to engulf us in its toppling rush; and with eyes fixed on that avalanche we gritted our teeth hard and clung to our work. Higher, higher, and higher that wave swelled, lower and lower and lower into the gulf we sank, and then

with a great roaring swash it came tumbling down toward us. One lingering instant of horrible suspense followed, and then the bow commenced to climb the towering wave. As though lashed to fury by the prospect of failure the mighty sea came foaming on.

Up to heaven shot the vast sheet of spray, and then down it came upon us. Half smothered, we gasped for breath for a moment, and then were high up on the top of the great wave, and dipping down into the trough beyond. The brig had stood the supreme test and we were safe!

"How's that, Tom?" the captain panted from his side of the wheel.

"Bully!" I responded, forgetting my "sir."

Such situations are great levellers of men, and for the moment captain and sailor were fellow-beings.

A few minutes later we lashed the wheel and left it. The brig was lying to, facing the gale, and steering was superfluous. If she could withstand the pounding of the sea, we were safe.

But our misery had not come to its end; in truth, it was much increased. We no longer settled into the troughs of seas, gently, smoothly, with rolling swings, to presently rise upon an easily undulating wave. The brig must now do battle with her foe. So long as she had opposed nothing and yielded everything, she had been boisterously but not un-

kindly handled. She was a baby to be coddled and tossed and wept over by mother ocean. Now, she had become a sulking, obdurate brat, and deserved to be mauled and yanked about until she should submit. Henceforth she was to be cuffed, kicked, slapped, and pounded into obedience, or else to conquer her dam.

The velocity of the gale had slightly decreased, but, now that we refused to go with it, its seeming velocity was doubled. It howled like a million demons among the shrouds and rigging, and came sharply, stinging cold, splashing the spray viciously in our faces. No voice could be heard above the din, and there was no escape from the flying water.

At short intervals, in addition to the spray, we were now flooded with brine. A second too late to meet a wave, dealt a stunning blow upon her nose, the brig would tremble and groan, while sheets of spray sprang aloft to come scurrying back, half drowning every man they met. Then the bowsprit would be poked deep into the side of an oncoming mountain, and before it could be wrenched clear of the wave tons of water would come pouring in over the bow and rush along back, taking everything before it.

The hatches had been tightly shut and battened, and the gangways leading from the main-deck had

both been closed, or we must have quickly foundered. As it was, the main-deck was so continuously awash that the crew were obliged to resort to the quarter-deck for safety. There, although the spray reached us often, we were in less danger of being washed off our feet.

In this way all of that day, and late into the following night, we were doused and battered, while the vessel twisted and pulled, shook and bellowed, meeting, dodging, and taking the blows dealt by the ocean, desperately struggling like a live thing to keep afloat. Awe-inspiring? Yes, but boring.

As we crouched for shelter behind the cabin skylight late in the afternoon of the second day, we heard Mr. Bowman call out above the uproar:

“ Who dares furl that jib ? ”

We all jumped to our feet and looked out over the bow. Near the end of the bowsprit a bit of canvas was fluttering in the wind. The flying jib was about to unfurl and in a moment would be spread out to be caught by the next wave. A dozen times that day we had seen the foretopmast bending like a bow as the brig tugged to lift her bowsprit from under the water; and now a wide sail was to be spread out beneath the waves for them to hold upon. The strain upon the spars had been tremendous before; what must be the result of this added weight! Surely, both mast and bowsprit

must give way, or we must be instantly swamped in the rushing flood. The danger was imminent and appalling to all who saw it.

“ The old Harry ’ll be to pay in a minute if that hain’t furled. Who dares to go out there ? ” shouted the mate.

For a single second Nye and myself stared at each other; and then we started together for the bow. Once we were swept from our feet into the lee scuppers, but recovered ourselves and dashed on. Within a minute we had reached and furled the flapping sail. I had finished tying the last knot that would make all secure, when Nye, who was farther out on the bowsprit, uttered an exclamation and threw both his arms about the spar. I had time to follow his example before a steel-blue wall rose in front of us and a cold flood swooped down. As I sank deeper and deeper, a confusing, rippling sound gurgled in my ears. Down, down we went until it seemed impossible to hold our breaths longer; then there came a sense of helplessness from an immense weight on our backs; a horrible roaring filled our ears and flashes of light blinded us, until we found ourselves suddenly waved high above the flood, and saw a great gulf yawning fifty feet below waiting to receive us once more.

For a second time during that storm my memory failed to keep its record, and I remember nothing

clearly of the next few minutes until Nye and I were standing together before Mr. Bowman on the quarter-deck.

“ You fellows have done your share for to-day, and, if yeh want to, yeh c’n go below,” he said.

That was all. There was no word of praise or commendation, even for Nye; but the mate ever afterwards showed that he had forgiven Nye.

We did want to go below, and went.

The next morning the sun shone upon a glassy sea. The hurricane had cast us out of its whirlwind and gone its turbulent way, leaving behind an ungoverned sea almost as disagreeable as itself. There were no defined waves to be met; nothing that could be guarded against; nothing that could be anticipated. The ocean simply slopped around us in erratic heaps, jerking the brig about until it seemed as if the masts must be snapped out of her. It was perilous to walk the decks, and several of the men who had never been seasick before confessed themselves so now; but toward noon a breeze sprang up to soothe the waters and steady our masts, and we again headed for the south.

This storm has been dwelt upon because it was the only one of its kind we met. Gales were not unusual—gales that, if we had not encountered that one, would have been deemed worthy of description here. When overtaken by such gales, we

hove to under shortened sail until better weather came. We preferred nice weather to such storms, but they were not greatly dreaded. While the wind blew, we lashed the wheel and forgot to scrub the decks, but the lookout was kept aloft regularly, and otherwise the humdrum of sea life went on. The big storm demanded our exclusive attention and received it; and we were satisfied to escape without the loss of sail, spar, or man.





CHAPTER XXIII

HAMMERHEADS AND FINBACKS

THE wind had left us drifting in another calm some days after the storm, when, looking from the masthead down near the brig, I discovered a peculiar monster swimming near us. As he came nearer, two small fishes could be seen, one on each side and a little in front of the big one, perhaps three feet from the ugly head. The great creature was wandering aimlessly, while the little "pilots" maintained their relative positions as he turned.

I watched the fishes several minutes before speaking to Frank, who was standing on the other mast. Then I pointed them out to him.

"That fellow looks like a muffled chopped hen," I observed.

"Don't 'e, though?"

"There 's a queer duck 'longside, sir," Frank reported to Mr. Bowman.

A rush by all hands to the side of the vessel

followed this announcement, and then we heard the mate say :

“ It ’s a thunderin’ big hammerhead. Somebody git the shark line and we ’ll have a bit o’ fun.”

A moment later the line was produced and a hook concealed in a piece of fat pork was dropped overboard in front of the shark. With the first splash, the brute glided forward, turned on his side with jaws distended, and pork and hook disappeared together down the capacious throat.

The fun was on, with five boys holding the body of the line and a monstrous hammerhead at the end of it.

Catching the spirit of the sport, the captain leaped to the railing where he could oversee it and directed the movements of the boys.

The shark, suddenly becoming aware that all was not well, dived for deep water.

“ Ease ’im, boys,” the captain shouted. “ Don’t hold ’im too taut or he ’ll yank the hook loose.”

Down and down went the shark until he had taken nearly all the line. “ Check ’im, boys—easy—easy,—not too sudden,” the captain cried, his hands and his face working like those of an orchestral leader.

The shark turned then to come up. “ Pull in, boys. *Faster—faster!* Git it or he ’ll chaw the darned line off,” screamed the master.

The line was coming in as fast as men could haul it in, but not so fast as the shark was rising. Up, up he came looking like a streak of silver, until he shot his length above the water and fell back with a great splash.

We looked eagerly at the line. It was hanging limp from a corner of the snapping mouth, unharmed.

Then his sharkship made a rush away from the brig that brought the line hissing through the fingers of the men.

"Hold 'im!" yelled the captain, slapping his legs to emphasize the order. "Hold 'im *fast*! Don't give 'im an *inch*!"

The boys secured better holds of the line and clung on. In vain the creature lashed the sea with his powerful tail, and wriggled, whirled, and twisted his lithe body. The line was strong and the hook well placed. The shark was held. In another second he was describing a circle having the line for its radius and ending in a tremendous thump on his nose, as he reached the side of the brig. For an instant, the monster lay stunned, but recovered and dashed away on the other tack—a tack we hoped would lead to a second bump.

"Steady—*steady*, now. Hang to 'im, boys. He 'll butt his brains out this pop, sure," the captain declared.

But the shark proved that he had gathered wisdom from experience, and, just as he would have struck the brig a second time, he veered sharply and came swimming rapidly beside her.

“ Pull *in*—pull in *lively* ! He ’ll ketch that line and you ’ll lose ’im ! ” the captain shrieked.

But the shark did not catch the line. Instead, he secured a good start on another dive for bottom, and the line was again whizzing through the fingers of the boys.

“ Hold ’im—*hold* ’im ! ” bellowed the captain.

The line continued to slip along, and one of the boys tried to catch a turn with it over a belaying pin in the rail.

“ No, no, *no* ! Don’t make that line *fast*. He ’ll break it sure—or yank loose. Ease ’im—there—that ’s it. Ease ’im so—keep a taut haul on ’im, but ease ’im—that ’s the way.”

The steady strain upon the line soon exhausted the shark and he turned once more toward the surface; but this time he was weary and discouraged, and came slowly, as though reluctant to reach the top.

“ There, he ’s done for, boys. Haul ’im in now—not too fast. Don’t rip the hook out—take your time, now. He ’s give it up,” the captain counselled.

Slowly the shark yielded and floated toward

the vessel as the boys pulled steadily on the line.

"We've got the old whelp," Frank cried, exultingly.

"Ye-up," I responded. "He's our meat, all right."

But at that instant the monster darted suddenly forward, and the boys, whose weights had been concentrated on the line, fell in a heap on the deck. Before they could get to their feet, the shark had doubled on himself, and we saw a loop of the line slipping between his jaws.

"Wa-al, I'll be switched!" exclaimed Frank.

The captain looked up at us and grinned. Then we watched his sharkship swimming leisurely away as though nothing had happened to him.

This shark was perhaps twelve feet long and differed from other sharks in the shape of his head. The head of the common shark is continuous with the body and comes to a rounded, shovel-like point at the front. The creature carried an enormous projecting growth on each side of his head that had reminded me of the muffled chops fowls at home. This growth, extending a foot or more from the sides, when looked at from aloft, seemed shaped much like a mallet or double-bitted axe, and the shark has derived his common name from this appearance. The eyes protruded boldly from either

end of the projecting growths, increasing the oddity of the brute. We found him surprisingly agile for a creature so awkward in looks.

I do not remember having seen one of this variety of shark among the schools which surrounded dead whales. The few we saw were, except for their little guardians, wandering alone.

The pilot fishes were handsome little fellows about a foot in length and marked with black stripes running across their silvery sides. They nearly always accompanied the larger sharks we saw wandering alone, and may have been among the swarms about whales, but I do not remember noticing them there. Those that we saw with the hammerhead disappeared during the struggle, but probably resumed their charge after it.

The shark had scarcely gone from sight before Frank shouted the potent cry,

“ There she blo-o-o-ows ! ”

A puff of spray shot straight and high above the water some miles from the brig, a black object was seen settling away, and the cry was repeated in subdued tones from all parts of the ship.

The spout rising straight and high, and falling back with the regular sweep of a water fountain, proclaimed the species of the whale.

“ It 's nothin' but a finback,” some one declared, and the boys on the deck resumed their work.

The finback is of all whales perhaps the least valuable and the most difficult to capture. He offers little temptation to the whaler to exert himself, and is usually left unmolested. He is much less valuable than either the killer, the grampus, or the sulphur bottom, while he rivals them all in speed.

Why the captain in this instance thought proper to order the boats lowered, we never knew. Perhaps he thought it would be good practice for the green members of his crew, and that the whale would yield enough to pay the cost of the labor. Whatever was the reason, the command was given for the boats to "get away."

Mr. Bowman had passed the fun-loving period of life and requested to be excused from lowering his boat. "All right," was the good-natured answer, so he remained on board while the captain and second mate started for the finback.

To avoid alarming him, it is necessary to approach any whale lying in still water with great caution. It was especially requisite that we should move quietly in coming upon a finback, for, once he is aroused, he is bound to escape. Hence, after rowing a short distance toward the animal, we took to the paddles for the balance of the way.

The animal was lying perfectly still, his back rising and sinking in the waves, and occasionally he

spouted as we paddled along. Slowly, softly dipping our little oars, we crept up to him.

"By George, the old weasel's asleep," the captain whispered to Jim. "You git in on that side and we'll take 'im on this," he added in a low voice to the second mate, who was just behind us. "Give 'im your lance fust, and foller it with your iron," he whispered to the boat-steerers in turn.

"Aye, aye, sir," they responded in whispers.

With bated breaths we drew cautiously in upon the apparently sleeping whale.

A little to one side of us a wide fluke lay spread out a few feet under the water. In front of that, and reaching beyond it something like sixty feet, was the long, narrow, black body of the animal. The head we could not see. The widest part of the brute did not exceed seven feet, and it required but a glance to know he was built for a racer.

On we crept, our boats barely moving, until we were near enough for effective use of the lances. We expected a swift run and hoped to make it a short one. The harpoons were resting in their crutches at the bows of the boats, and each boat-steerer grasped his lance, awaiting the signal which would insure concert of action.

"*Now,*" whispered the captain.

Both lances entered the sides of the beast, instantly followed by two harpoons.

"*Stern* all!" shouted both officers.

"What the blazes!" gasped the captain a second later.

"I 'll be guzzled!" ejaculated Mr. Brown.

Instead of the whisking of the great tail we had expected, and the sudden rush for liberty confidently looked for, the animal remained perfectly quiet. He did not so much as quiver; he was stone dead. Then, to cap the climax of our disappointment, the captain announced in the tone of a man who has been injured:

"I vum, the old skeezuks is goin' to sink!"

The small portion of the back that had before shown above the water had gone down, and the whale was fast settling away before our eyes.

Turns were at once taken around the loggerheads in both boats, in the hope of holding the whale up with the lines; but he proved too heavy and the ropes were gradually eased as he sank.

"Guess we can't hold 'im up, but mebbe he won't go very deep, or the wind may come up and git the brig down here. I kinder want 'im now we 're fast," the captain advised us. "We 'll wait a spell anyway, and see what 'll happen."

So we sat in our boats slowly slacking out the lines and watching the receding finback.

I do not know how deep the whale was before he finally passed from sight. In midocean the

water is almost as colorless as air, and, with the eyes placed near to its surface, it is possible to distinguish objects at considerable depth. One tubful of our line and part of the other had slipped down over the bow before he finally faded from our view.

As we thus sat, hoping against hope, that something would occur to save the whale to us, Jim opened conversation with the captain:

"Did yeh ever know Mart Snow, sir?" he began.

"Ust to live up 'round New Bedford, and sailed once in the *R. L. Barstow*?"

"Ye-ah."

"Ye-ah, I know him. What about 'im?"

"Wa-al, jest before we left, he was tellin' us a yarn about one o' these whales."

"Uh-huh, I know. He wa'n't slow, s'pose yeh tell it."

"Wa-al, Mart said that one time they got on to one of 'em, jest as we did jest now, but, instead of sendin' their lances into him, as we did, they chucked an iron into 'im from one boat.

"Wal, suh, Mart said that whale jest lit out like a streak, and in less than ten minutes they was out of sight o' the ship and still a-goin'. He said they actually did n't see a thing o' that whale after they struck 'im; and the spray from the boat was that

dummed fine it looked like steam, and in fifteen minutes the nails was drawin' out of the bottom o' the blamed boat. The water ketched under the nail-heads and yanked 'em square out, the whale went so, and, by gum, they had to cut and let the critter go, to save the boat. Them nails was jest bein' pulled clean out of the bottom of the boat and they had to let go or go to the dogs."

At the end of this story Jim settled back, looking satisfied.

"That hain't bad," said the captain, "but that whale wa'n't nowhere 'longside o' the fust one I saw. Wonder if I've ever told yeh about the fin-back we struck off o' Pete's Island, when I was steerin' a boat? Don't believe I have, have I?"

"Don't remember it, if yeh have," responded Jim.

"Thought mebbe I had n't. Wa-al, it'll do to foller Mart's.

"We'd been into Pete's all day and come aboard at night to stand out, the way we gen'ally do 'round them islands. Pete had another wife in them days. She was a stunner, too, and no mistake. Pete himself was a leetle mite stingy in them times, but he's got putty well 'over it now, hain't 'e!—but *she* was all right, *I* tell yeh. She set things up for all hands in great shape, and everybody come abroad that night bringin' a big

bottle o' palm juice, besides all he could take away under his hat.

"I was feelin' a bit cur'ous, and, soon 's we got under way, turned into my bunk. It seemed to me I had n't got to sleep, when some feller come a-hollerin' down the gangway:

" 'All hands on deck. There 's a school o' whales right 'longside.'

"Of course, I hustled out and got on deck quick time, pullin' on my breeches as I went, and sure enough, not half a mile off, there they was, waitin' for us to come and pick 'em up.

"Down we went, and in two minutes the old man had me plum a-top of a thunderin' big one, and I let drive both irons into 'im."

The narrator stopped. "Here, Tom, hold this, and when yeh see we 're like to go under water, kinder slack it off."

I took the line, and he lit his pipe, took several whiffs to insure its going, packed the tobacco well into the bowl with his thumb, and resumed his story:

"Wa-al, suh, that whale lit right out for South Ameriky—p'inted straight out a-flukin'. We had n't more 'n got started afore the old man yelled to me to cut; but things was so mighty unstiddy by that time that I could n't cut the line quick enough to suit, and he slashed it clost up to the loggerhead himself.

“ He could n’t a done a meaner thing, or a wuss thing. That dummed line come the length of that boat and snapped the bow oarsman clean off his seat, and the poor fellow went thrashin’ past me and the next thing I see there wa’ n’t nothin’ left o’ ’im but his coat, that had ketched in the chock with the end of that line twisted ’round it sost it could n’t git through, and there we was goin’ it faster ’n ever.

“ ‘ Cut that line, you d——d fool!’ the old man yelled at me again.

“ But I could n’t no more take my hands off o’ the sides of that boat than I could have gone to heaven on an oar.

“ Wa-al, now, yeh better b’lieve we was goin’ for all there was out. Talk about spray lookin’ like *steam*! There wa’ n’t no spray to *look*. That boat did n’t tech the water once in four hundr’d milds. Gee whiz-zip! She stood up and *skipped* five or ten degrees ev’ry jump—never tetched a thing but the keel, and that mighty seldom. The water under us was so durned hot it smoked—’t wa’ n’t *steam*, ’t was *smoke*. In two minutes that keel was scraped to *dust*, and there wa’ n’t nothing but water sizzlin’ under us. You jest could n’t look at the stuff it whizzed by so fast—it made me sick jest to look at it.

“ Thinks I, things can’t *last* this way, and I

made up my mind to git a holt on that line some-way or bust. I wa' n't a bit too soon, nuther. I made a dive and ketched a holt of it, and then that dummed boat jest melted away from under me, and left me skinnin' along top o' the water after the whale. 'T wa' n't no time at all after that afore I made out the mouth of the Amazon River straight ahead of us, and I got hoping the blamed critter would run in there and I would git 'im yit."

The captain paused, loosened the tobacco in his pipe with a penknife, leaned back with a knee between his palms, and smoked a minute complacently before beginning again:

" You can believe me or not, just as you darned please, but when we come to where I could see the priests jest startin' out to say mass—right up clost to one of them big stone churches they have there—what does that blasted whale do but *raise*! Yes siree, he did! He raised right up and went like a deuced bird, a-kitin' clean over to t' other side of that continent, suh.

" Mebbe I *might* let yeh look at the scars that I got on my knees grazin' the top of them Andes as we sailed over 'em, if I had a mind to—I did n't save the holes they ripped out of my trousers as they scratched out—but I guess I won't.

" Never saw them mountains, did yeh, any of yeh? They 're putty well up, I tell yeh, and

't was about all old finny wanted to do to climb over 'em, if he was flyin', and he come mighty clost to droppin' me on *this* side, as 't was. But I hung on to him and he took me over fair.

" Wa-al, as I was sayin', I went with 'im, clean over to t' other side, and there happened to be a humpback over there. Dunno whether you 've ever run acrost one o' them whales or not. It don't matter, anyhow, whether yeh have or not. They 've got a head on 'em that opens on top, and it 's about big enough to take in a ship, if she was jest p'inted right for 'em. Their upper jaws look like scoop shovels wrong side up, and the under ones is a dang sight like 'em, only bigger. Wa-al, one of them whales was over there scoopin' herrin's in by the cart load for breakfast or supper—I forgot the time o' day we arrived—and must have had his mouth jest ready to take in a big scoop, when, sure 's you 're a foot high, that finback streaked it right square down that old humpback's gullet, quicker than scat. Yeh could n't a said ' Jack Robinson,' afore he was in clear out of sight.

" There did n't appear to be no room for me in *there*, so I let go of the line and slipped up on to the back of the critter. You see, the finback was conside'ble longer than the humpback, and in gittin' inside he must have sort of doubled up and raised the back of the old humpback some—any-

how, when I got up there, there I was, slick and dry as yeh please."

The captain stopped short, and one of the boys gasped :

" How—how did yeh git off, sir ? "

The captain smiled blandly.

" Oh, I rolled over and took another swig at that bottle, and dreamed of suthin' else the rest of that watch, my lad."

" Hullo! There 's two lines and two irons gone to bungy jest for an old skeleton that wa' n't wuth skinnin'."

The lines were exhausted and there was no longer any hope of saving our finback, so we rowed back to the brig.

In the dog watch that evening, when the boys had gathered about the windlass for their usual talks, Jack spoke up:

" The old man 's putty fair on a yarn, hain't 'e ? But then, *that* was nuthin' but moonshine. I can tell yeh one that 's a fact, and it 's about a finback, too. I know it 's a fact cuzz the feller that told it to me was there and seen it himself—said he did. He ust to sail out of New Bedford afore the *Alabamy* got to playin' the dickens so, and they come up with an old finback once and took a notion to hook on to 'im. He did n't see 'em, and they got on to 'im and afore he knowed a thing about 'em,

chugged two irons home—same 's we done, only that old feller wa' n't no slow poke like our'n.

“Talk about greased lightenin', and flyin' over mountains! Huh! Jiminy—*birds* wa' n't *nowhere* with *that* whale. The minute they struck him he was jest *gone*, that 's all. They never so much as see the *smoke* of 'im, after them irons left the boat. He did n't leave a *ripple*. There was a *flash*, and that was all.

“The old man commenced cussin' the boat-steerer for missin' the durned thing—said he 'd break suthin' besides his job for 'im if he could n't do better 'n that, and was goin' it high, when they thought to haul in the line. Wa-al, suh, then come the cur'ous part of it. There wa' n't no iron on the dummed line at all. That whale had started to go so plaguey quick that he 'd jest snapped that line clean off, without so much as startin' the boat. Yes, suh. He went so darned sudden that the line did n't have time to follow afore ——”

A bucketful of water doused over the head of the speaker here interrupted him.

“Aw now, sonny! That 's no way to do. I was givin' yeh straight goods and a yard wide. But you fellers don't know how to appreciate me, no-how,” said Jack, after shaking himself.

I was never able to determine how much of the reputation of the finback whale for speed has been

built upon such stories as these. We saw a number of them afterwards, but were never again foolish enough to lower for them.

I can explain the incident with the particular whale we struck only upon the theory that upon the instant when we reached him he was about to die from natural causes. The animal was undoubtedly alive a few seconds before, for he breathed heavily in our hearing and sight; but there was no movement of his body after the lances were thrown. It is not probable that, even if both the lances and harpoons had entered the heart of the whale, the instant dissolution we saw would have resulted. It is more reasonable to suppose that we happened upon a death scene; and that our lines and irons would have been saved to us but for our too prompt arrival.





CHAPTER XXIV

WE SEE A GRAMPUS AND STRIKE A SPERM WHALE

IT may have been two weeks later that we hove to and lashed our wheel to ride out a moderate gale. A merchantman would have carried her canvas and gone in some discomfort upon her way. But there was nothing to be gained by us in rapid sailing. We were whalers on whaling grounds, and there was no object in submitting to be drenched. The sky was overcast, the sea ran high, the masts jerked and swung in a manner to keep the lookout awake. The air was misty and full of flying spray. In short, the day was unpleasant and dreary.

I had been perched at the masthead for an hour when my eye was caught by a splash some miles from us that seemed out of the common. It was fully a minute after that before anything more of it could be made out. Then a whale, about the size of and shaped much like a killer, but minus the great back fin, leaped clear of the water and disappeared in a graceful dive.

“ There she bree-ee-eeches ! ” I screamed.

The usual inquiries and answers followed and everybody was on the watch for a sight of the animal. It was not long before he again came flying into the air, now much nearer than before, and sank away in the same smooth dive.

The captain left the rigging into which he had climbed, and I heard him say :

“ There hain’t no use botherin’ with that feller. He ’s makin’ his passage, and will be clean gone afore we can git a boat down.”

A moment later the animal sprang into the air less than a fourth of a mile away from us, his entire body going several feet above the water and passing so fully his length, before he dipped again back into the sea. He was as agile and light as a flying fish, carrying his tons with as much apparent ease.

“ What was that, sir ? ” I heard Frank inquire of Mr. Bowman, who had mounted to the other mast-head.

“ Oh, that ’s nothin’ but a grampus.”

“ Wa-al, he ’s a hummer, anyway.”

“ ’Bout as good as they make, I guess.”

It is difficult accurately to measure distances by the eye alone in an open sea, and especially so in a gale. But it is probable that whale was three miles from me when I first saw him. From that point he passed to within a few hundred yards of the brig,

and thence straight on out of sight on the other side of us in something like twenty minutes. While doing so he made five or six such leaps as have been described. If the finback can equal the performance of that grampus, the yarns told about his speed have some basis of truth.

My time at the masthead had not expired, and the lookout was resumed, but with a feeling that the day was over. We did not expect to see more than one lot of whales in a single day; but we had no more than settled back to look further, before Frank asked :

“ Did yeh see anything, Tom ? ”

“ No. Where ? ”

“ Thought I saw suthin' right over theer, but it 's gone. No, 't ain't ! ”

The familiar cry on raising a whale rang out, not alone from Frank, but all over the brig. Not a hundred yards from us, the grayish-brown head of an enormous sperm whale was rising from the water. Up, up it rose, until the little eye of the animal could be plainly seen, and there, with his head fully thirty feet out of the waves, he stood for some seconds inspecting the brig. Then, with ponderous slowness, the whale sank out of sight.

The order to man the boats reached me, and I hurried to the deck. On reaching my place, Jim said to me, with much elation :

“ I ’m goin’ to take ’er, Tom, and you ’re to steer me; so you git into the head o’ the boat, there.”

In view of the bad weather, the captain had concluded to act himself as ship keeper.

A green man was to pull my oar; I was to act as boat-steerer; and Jim was to take command of the boat. No time was lost in effecting these changes.

In the high-running sea, caution was required in launching the boats. A whale-boat once launched will ride almost any sea, but it will not bear much bumping on the sides of the ship. So we were rather slow about getting away. At last, the conditions were right, and we dropped our boat safely upon the water. Then, having first set the harpoon crutch in place and rested the irons upon it, I took my seat on the foremost thwart and worked at an oar with the others.

It would be only by chance that we could hope to keep track of the whale or to find him without aid from the brig. In so rough a sea we might run within twenty feet of the animal, almost, without discovering him, for it was only when raised to the top of some wave that we could see more than a few feet from us, and then but for a few seconds. It is usual, under such circumstances, in locating the game, to depend largely upon signals from the masthead of the ship. So, after getting well clear

of the brig, we rested on our oars for a few minutes, waiting such help to find the whale.

No signals being given, Jim became impatient and ordered us to pull.

For some time we rowed steadily away from the vessel, Jim standing nervously on his tiptoes and stretching his neck high at the top of each wave, and then looking knowingly at us as we settled down into the troughs, until we had gone so far from the brig that if signals had been made to us we would hardly have been able to make them out.

Mr. Bowman had followed close after us in his boat, and presently we heard him call to Jim :

“ How long is it sence you saw 'im ? ”

“ I hain't seen 'im at all,” Jim shouted back.

“ What in blazes are yeh doin' out here for, then ? ”

“ Tryin' to find that whale,” said Jim confidently.

“ Wa-al, then I guess we 've missed 'im, and all on account o' your dummed pig-headedness, too,” the mate grumbled loudly. “ I s'posed of course you 'd seen 'im, and so I follered yeh, dog-gone the luck ! ”

We learned afterwards that nobody on the brig had seen the whale after the boats were lowered, but the second mate had caught sight of him, and, while we were quarrelling a mile away, was vainly endeavoring to overtake him.

The outlook for us was dubious enough. A moment before I had been in ecstasy over my chance to strike a sperm whale. It had seemed the opportunity of a lifetime and I was eager to grasp it; and now, through Jim's stupid blunder, it had gone. My heart was sunk in bitterness, and I was about to hurl my invectives at my superior, when he gasped:

“ *Gosh, Tom—git up!* ”

I sprang to my feet and caught up an iron. Right in front of the boat, deep in the trough of the sea into which we were descending, was the largest whale I had ever seen—not the whale we had come out after, but a better one. That one had a grayish-brown head; this head was mottled with white.

A numbness came creeping over me. For an instant, I seemed to be suffocating. My head swam and my balance was uncertain.

“ Give it to 'im, Tom,” shrieked Jim.

At the sound of the voice, my head was clear again. I drew a long breath, and, pausing just long enough to take a sure aim, sent my harpoon straight into the hump of the beast. The wave settled from under the boat, bringing us on a level with the animal, and there I pushed the second iron to its pole into his side.

“ Stern *all!* ” roared Jim.

The boat was rising on the next wave before the fluke rose, half filling our boat with its great swash, and then the whale dived, taking our line whizzing after him.

"Bully! I knowed you was all right, Tom. I told the old man you could do it," Jim shouted, exultantly, as the whale disappeared in the depths.

A large sperm whale will breathe fifty or sixty times in the course of ten or twelve minutes, and is then able to wander for an hour or more on the bottom of the sea. The whale we had struck must have thus prepared himself, for it was an hour and twenty minutes after he took his plunge before we heard from him again—an hour of most decided anxiety and discomfort for us all.

On all the other occasions when we had chased whales the rest following this first dive had been welcome. It had enabled us to recover from our exhaustion and given time to cool our overheated bodies. We had usually tugged at the oars under a blazing sun until our blood was at the boiling point, after which we had greatly enjoyed the still hot, but balmy air. We had always found comfort in splashing the cool water over our wrists and bodies and had never been especially in a hurry for the whale to come up.

Now, it was all very different. Instead of coming out under a hot sun, we had been rowing in a

chilling storm of wind and rain, under cold, gray clouds. The exercise had started our perspiratory glands to work, but we found nothing but torture in the pelting rain and spray that soaked our clothes and trickled down our backs. The wind, whistling dismally around us, precluded anything like general conversation, and we sat humped up on our seats throughout those eighty minutes, distracted and miserable.

This whale, although he remained down a long time, did not dive very deep; and, before the first tub had been emptied of its line, we had successfully nipped it. After that, with a good turn around the loggerhead, we floated about here and there, while the whale wandered hither and thither beneath us. It was seemingly many hours that we thus waited for our whale. Then the line began to move out in front of the boat, became suddenly taut, and we started on a moderately swift run to windward.

As soon as we commenced to follow in the wake of the animal, Mr. Bowman threw us his boat warp, which was made fast to our loggerhead, and both boats were off in tow of the whale.

The beast carried no flag and blew no whistle to inform us of his whereabouts, and it was a long time after we were fully under way before we caught sight of him. It was only when both he and the

boats were near the summit of some great wave at the identical moment that we could see him at all, and often minutes would elapse with no such coincidence. His breathing, like that of all sperm whales, was slow, and, in such a sea, his spouting could be easily mistaken for a bit of spray. When we did catch glimpses of him it was always when his head was towering above the waves in one of his lunging leaps away from us, buffeting the sea into great rolls of foam.

As we started behind the whale, the brig was still in sight. We could occasionally see her topsail, and once in a while we could even make out her hull. But within a few minutes we lost all sight of her.

For some time we hauled hand over hand upon our line, hoping to draw ourselves near enough to the whale to shoot him; but at the end of an hour had gained less than half the distance necessary to our purpose. The sea, the gale, and the velocity of the whale all worked against us.

At last, the gathering darkness warned us of the approaching night, and Mr. Bowman called to us from behind:

“ I guess yeh ’ll have to cut, Jim.”

I had changed ends in the boat with Jim, and was at the stern, where I could hear the mate. Jim, at the bow, raised a hand to his ear, striving to catch the words. I passed the order on to him:

"He thinks we 'll have to cut," I shouted.

"Can't we hold on a minute longer? Tell 'im I b'lieve the old cuss is slackin' some now," came back to me on the wind and was sent back to the mate.

Mr. Bowman settled back on his seat, and for half an hour longer we sped on in silence, the other boat becoming more and more indistinct in the darkness behind us. Then the mate put his hands to his mouth and bawled at us:

"*Cut* that line!"

"The mate says *cut*," I screamed to Jim.

Jim put his hand again to his ear, but feigned not to hear.

"*Cut—cut*," I repeated. "The *mate* says *cut*."

Jim came slowly to the stern of the boat, where he could talk directly with Mr. Bowman.

"I b'lieve we can git——," he began.

"Cut — yeh blasted fool, *cut*! CUT! Keep your consarned gab for somebody who wants it—*cut*, you blamed idiot!" the mate bellowed in fury.

"He 's boss, or darned if *I'd* do it," Jim growled to me.

"Well, he 's *right*," I snapped in answer.

So far as I know, no note had been taken of our course after leaving the brig; and I felt by no means sure we could find her again in the dark. If the wind had not shifted, and a fire were to be built

on the vessel to assist us, it would not be difficult to find our way back, for we had come directly to windward all the way; but who could tell whether the wind had shifted! To pass even one night in that storm, dressed as we were and in an open boat, was not a cheering prospect. My sympathies were wholly with the mate and against Jim.

Jim muttered something that did not reach me, and went slowly back to the bow. There he fumbled for a long time, pretending to look for the boat hatchet with which to cut the line. It was very hard for Jim to abandon this, his first chance to kill a whale; but at last, after the rumble of the mate's voice, shouting oaths that cannot be echoed here, must have reached him, the line was cut and the whale was free.

Then we cast off the warp of the mate's boat from our loggerhead; Jim resumed the steering of our boat; and I went back to the bow to pull my oar. The wind was too strong to allow of setting up the sail.

"Bowman's gittin' to be more and more an old granny ev'ry day he lives," Jim enlightened us, a minute later. "He's gittin' too *old* to go whalin', anyhow."

The mate swung his boat broadside to the gale and started off.

"Where yeh going?" Jim cried, fully confirmed in his notion that Mr. Bowman was mentally failing.

"Goin' aboard," was the gruff reply.

"Not *that* way, yeh won't," shouted Jim, turning his own boat squarely around, to head with the wind. "The brig 's off *here*," he insisted.

In a moment the boats had drifted almost out of sight of each other, but we could hear the mate bellow:

"Come back here, you d——d blockhead!"

"True as you 'r born, he 's out of his head," Jim declared, but laid our boat alongside the other one.

"What in hell 's the matter with you?" the mate demanded.

"Nothin' 's the matter, only I don't see no use stayin' out here after we 've cut," said Jim boldly.

"Wa-al, *that* 's a —— of a note, *that* is. You *ust* to have some sense once, but yeh seem to have gone daft all of a sudden. Where in —— —— was yeh goin' jest now, anyhow?"

"I was goin' to the brig," Jim answered stoutly, "and I 'm darned if I would n't like to know where you think you was goin' to."

"So yeh think she 's straight to leeward, do yeh?"

"I know mighty well she 's there," said Jim.

"Have yeh got a *compass* aboard that boat?"

Jim's voice was a trifle less confident as he answered this question:

"Ye-ye-us, I have."

"Have yeh *looked* at it sence yeh started?"

"We come dead to wind'ard and there wa' n't no *use* lookin' at it," Jim replied hotly, but with some trepidation showing in his tone.

"Wa-al, mebbe not; but that 's what compasses is *made* for. The next time you start out in a gale like this, you 'd better look at your compass once in a while, jest to keep from gittin' lonesome if nothin' else. The wind *was* nor'east, and the brig was astern. It 's blowin' nor'west by west, *now*; and the brig 's over *here*, you *gump*!"

In the light of his recently expressed opinion of the mate's condition, this information was undoubtedly galling to Jim.

"Pull ahead, boys. I s'pose we 'll have to do as he says; but it 's mighty onsartain whether we ever see the brig ag'in to-night," he growled.

In a half-hearted way we bent to our oars, but, as the exercise started our blood to flowing, we recovered courage and sent the boat along at a lively pace. In less than an hour Jim called to the mate, while he pointed to a reddish blush on the horizon ahead,

"There she *is*, sir."

"I know it. Saw it ten minutes ago," the mate answered contemptuously.

The men on the brig were doing their best to

guide us home, and we were soon back on the vessel.

“ What do you think of the old granny, anyhow, Jim ? ” I heard Frank ask the next day.

“ Go to thunder ! ” Jim replied.





CHAPTER XXV

A SULPHUR BOTTOM

THE last storm was followed by weeks of a calm. An ordinary storm is not always unwelcome to seamen on the ocean. Inspiring the mind with new thoughts, a storm affords relief from the sense of imprisonment that is so apt to accompany long voyages; it is not all bad. But a calm was never welcomed by us. Next to a hurricane, a calm was the misery-maker of the trip. As days followed days without relief from it, the desire to be free amounted almost to a mania with us. To see the same faces, the same rigging, the same decks, the same sails, the same sea, to smell the same odors and do the same tasks, week in and week out, always the same, was intolerable. It became a life of unbearable pain, with no localized ache—just a tantalizing misery from which there was no hope of escape.

We had been enduring that sort of torment for some weeks, when we found ourselves suddenly enveloped in fog. In place of glinting waters, scorching decks,

and burning sunbeams, the sea became dull and gray, the decks were damp and slippery, there was no sun, everything was dripping and cold. The fog finally became so thick that we could not see the end of the bowsprit; and the officers on the quarter-deck could not see a man at the bow.

Several days went by before the fog lifted sufficiently to make it worth while to go to the mast-head at all; and, strangely enough, no one grumbled at the change of weather. After so much of glare and heat the fog was restful.

At last it cleared up enough to permit our resuming the lookout for whales, although at times our vision was still limited to a few yards about us, and one day I discovered from my post aloft, slightly astern of the brig, what seemed to be a sand-bank. About the same instant, Frank noticed the same thing, and reported to Mr. Bowman:

“ We can see bottom off the starb’rd quarter, sir.”

A shoal so far out at sea as we were is unusual, and the crew crowded to the side of the vessel to look.

“ *Shoal*, yeh say! Wa-al, that ’s a putty lively shoal, that is!” the mate exclaimed, greatly excited.

Our shoal had been gliding along nearer the brig and had developed into a whale of such enormous proportions that I scarcely dare to state them.

Slowly, with evident caution, the animal crept closer and closer, gradually rising as he came, until he was so near that a man diving from the rail could have readily reached his body; and there he lay for some minutes apparently looking us over.

In color, he was of a uniform yellow, except along the middle of the back, which was of a yellowish brown. In general outline and grace of form he more nearly resembled the killers than anything else we had seen, but the huge dorsal fin was not there, and he seemed to have no teeth, while in size the killer was a baby beside him. The head ended in front in a rounded point, from which it gracefully swelled as it extended back some twenty-five or thirty feet, where it attained a diameter of probably twelve feet. Still farther back, twenty or more feet, the body had reached a diameter of not less than fifteen feet, from which it tapered away on elegant, curving lines until it joined the fluke away behind. The fluke, except for its width of perhaps fifteen feet, was similar to that of all whales. In length, the animal was not less than a hundred feet. We did not actually measure any part of the whale, but as he lay alongside the brig we were able to approximate his dimensions. The brig was one hundred and twenty-seven feet long from stem to stern; and when the fluke of the animal lay opposite the stern-rail the end of his nose was slightly ahead of

our fore rigging. He was at least twenty feet longer than the largest sperm whale we came upon, and in every way more trim of shape.

"It's a *sulphur bottom*," the captain announced in awed tones.

Jim climbed into the captain's boat, from which he could look directly down upon the whale, and commenced preparing to send a harpoon into the monstrous back.

"*No!* no, no, no-o-o-o. Don't poke that iron into 'im, you galoot!" shouted Mr. Bowman. "That 's wuss than useless. You can't hold that whale with no *iron*. Yeh 've got to kill 'im on the spot or yeh 'll never see 'im ag'in. Somebody bring up the guns, here."

Two whale guns were quickly brought from the cabin, and Mr. Bowman and the captain stood armed with them near the bow, waiting for the sulphur bottom to rise to the surface.

It seemed hours before the animal had satisfied his curiosity concerning the flipperless, barnacle-covered, seaweed-draped creature he had come across, and was ready to take another breath of life. But at last, almost imperceptibly, he commenced moving toward the surface, going gently forward until a broad expanse of brownish-yellow skin broke from the water alongside the brig, and then both the guns roared above it.

The effect was immediate and marvellous. No living creature could have moved with greater celerity. It was so sudden and so rapid that the outlines of that enormous animal were instantly blotted out. With one flash of blending colors he was gone. No shadow was ever more magically or completely dispelled. He simply disappeared and left us to wonder.

“ Wa-al — wa-al — *wa-al!* ” gasped Frank. “ By gum, that beats *lightenin’!* ”

The whale was snuffed out and we never saw anything more of him. It is not probable he survived the effect of the two bombs; but, although we searched in the fog all day, we did not succeed in finding him; and it is likely he went a considerable distance before he died.

The sulphur bottom is said to inhabit the Pacific coast, most commonly that of California, so that this specimen must have been a wanderer from his home. He is the largest of the whale kind — perhaps the largest animal the earth has known in any age; and the one we saw was equal in size to any described in the books. He is not rated among the fighters of the whale tribe; but, because of his great strength and remarkable agility, he was at the time of which I write seldom taken by whalers. Only one man of our crew had ever assisted in a successful attack upon one of these monsters. Mr. Bowman

had been engaged in whaling for more than forty years; and, during that time, had seen three of them killed. His experience with one of these was told to Frank and myself that evening.

Frank, who had charge of the first night watch, had come forward on some pretence, but in fact to talk with me. We had been chatting a few minutes, when Mr. Bowman followed and seated himself on the windlass by us.

"I thought that whale Tom struck the other day was putty big; but this one we saw to-day kinder laid over 'im," said Frank, intending to draw the mate into a story.

The mate chipped off a piece of tobacco with his knife from a plug and commenced chewing it before making any reply. Then he settled himself comfortably upon a coil of rope on the deck and began:

"Ye-us. I don't hardly b'lieve you 'll ever run acrost anything alive bigger than that feller was. I 've seen sulphur bottoms that was mighty clost to him; but I hain't never seen nothin' else that could come anywheres nigh 'im for bigness. Take 'im all in all he was a rouser, and no mistake about it. Ye-ah, that whale was a buster, that 's a fact."

"Did yeh ever kill one of 'em?" I asked.

"We killed one on my fust v'yage; and I 've helped kill two sence. Fust and last, I guess I 've

seen twenty or thirty, mebbe more; but they 're hard to take. It 's sorter like spattin' a fly to git one of 'em—when yeh think you 're right on to 'im, like as not he won't be there. That has be'n my experience with 'em, and so fur as I can find out that 's the way with all of 'em—they jest give one flop and they 're gone. They 're the quickest durned whale that floats, and the biggest.

“ They can make it mighty onpleasant for yeh, too, when you 're fast. The fust one I ever hooked to towed us durned nigh ten milds in twenty minutes, after we 'd put two lances plum to the poles behind his flipper at that. He jest run until he died. The lances done the business finally, and when he hove to he was dead.

“ You remember how you fellers got up on to that old finback t' other day? Wa-al, 't was suthin' like that. We raised 'im a mild or two off and lowered two boats for 'im. He was layin' asleep—seemed to be, anyhow; and we paddled up to 'im, one of us on each side, same as you did on the finback, and let the lances drive fust, and then our boat-steerer got his iron into him solid. I was pullin' the bow oar that time. Old Isaiah Purring-ton was steerin' us, and he was quicker 'n a cat, anyhow. The other feller wa' n't lively enough and did n't git fast. He missed and we went off alone with the whale.

“ I had the nippers on the line afore the iron fairly left the boat, to keep it from bein’ jerked clean away from us afore ’t would do to take a turn ’round the loggerhead with it. Yeh see I knew them fellers had a way of startin’ so sudden that it would n’t do to have nothin’ fast nowheres—the mate had told us all about ’em as we come along, and I had my orders to be ready with the nippers. If anything was to be fast the darned whale would rip the boat to bits in the shake of your finger, sure. As ’t was, he emptied one tub and a good part of t’ other one afore we could git the line where we could hold on to it, and he had n’t sounded nuther. He jest lit straight out a-top of the water from the fust prick of that lance.

“ Talk about *finbacks*! Why, a finback is jest a *snail* alongside of one o’ them sulphur bottoms. *Go!*—greased light’nin’ ain’t a circumstance, the way that whale went. I ’ll be jiggered if I see how that line ever stood it, or the boat, nuther. Gee-whiz! but how we did go!

“ Wa-al, as I said a minute ago, we went like Geehew that way for mebbe twenty minutes, and then all to wunst that old sulphur bottom whirled square ’round and streaked it straight for the boat. Hey, *what*! Yessuh, he did—he come a-flukin’ it straight for us, and if our hair wa’ n’t standin’ on end the next few seconts, yeh need n’t gimme a nuther

cent. There wa' n't no dodgin' that feller — you could n't get out of the way of no sech flyer as he was, and it looked as if it was all day with *us*. If he *had* meant us, he 'd have got us, no two words about it. We could n't have got an oar out before he 'd have been a-top of us. But, yeh see, he was jest comin' in his *flurry*, that was all, and had n't no notion of botherin' us.

“ But it looked so, and our hair jest stood straight up 'til he got down clost by where we was — 't wa' n't no time, hardly. Then he takes a shoot sort of sideways, and you may skin me right here if he did n't go plum twenty foot out of water—that hull darned whale, straight up clear of ev'rything. It was the biggest durned jump I ever saw before or sence; and, if there 's to be any more of 'em 'round me, I 'll git excused from bein' quite so clost as we was, that 's all. A whale-boat will stand some considerable sloshin' around it, but when that whale come down that time the water jest swashed all over us—that boat was jest *swamped*; and, I vum! if I don't believe it showered there for as much as five minutes after it was all over.”

The mate threw away his cud and rose to go aft.

“ So you got him ? ” said Frank.

“ Ye-us, that was his last kick.”

“ Was he wuth much ? ”

“ Made a hundred barrels.”

“ Do you know how long he was—what he measured, sir ? ” I ventured to ask.

“ Wa-al, yes, I do. We put the lines on that feller so 's to know. 'T ain't often we git so partic'lar as all that comes to, but we *did* that time, and that whale measured by the tape line ninety-four foot and some inches from the crotch of his fluke to the p'int of his nose. He wa' n't so long by a conside'ble as the one that was 'longside of us this mornin', but he was big enough to make us cur'ous to know jest how big he was.”





"IT WAS THE BIGGEST DURNED JUMP I EVER SAW."



CHAPTER XXVI

TATTOOING

THE scrimshawing fad had run its course, or the material to work upon had become exhausted, shortly before we came across the sulphur bottom; and, a few days later, Nye produced a bottle of India ink and proceeded to instruct us in tattooing.

The operation was as simple as its effects were lasting. The outline of an intended picture was first drawn with an ordinary pen upon the surface to be ornamented, after which a paste of the India ink was smeared on within the marked lines. Then the ink was deeply pricked into the true skin by means of a number of needles tied on to the end of a penholder. Once completed the design was indelibly affixed to the part for life.

Considerable pain usually attended the operation, and it was not seldom followed by quite severe inflammation; but tattooing was the fashion of the hour, and, just as ladies endure stays and gentle-

men tight boots, our crew laughed at the agony for the sake of doing as others did.

Nye limited his work to anchors, stars, and whales, drawn in solid blue on the hands or fore-arms of the boys. My own efforts were soon directed to more ambitious pictures, such as flags, crosses, eagles, and girls, done in red and blue ink, not alone upon the hands and arms of my victims, but upon breasts, shoulders, and other parts of the body. The results were too often ludicrous disfigurements of the persons, but they were generally satisfactory to the men who suffered them.

I had fixed a number of these works of art upon our Portuguese mates, when one day big Antone came to me with his arm bared to the shoulder, exposing an unusually smooth and broad deltoid as a field for operations.

“ Savve ? ” he asked.

“ Yes. What shall I make ? ”

He made the sign of the cross, after the manner of the Roman Church, and placed a finger on his shoulder. “ Savve ? ” he asked again.

“ All right, old boy, I ’m your man for the job,” I said.

The cross was laid out upon the shoulder on as large a scale as the surface would permit and its outline pricked in that day. Then, at odd times during the succeeding week, the body and limbs of

a man suspended upon the cross in the approved way by means of round-headed tacks was added; when nothing remained to be done but to paint the head and face.

With delight written on every feature, running about and exhibiting my work to officers and men, big Antone was in ecstasies; but my own mind was troubled. It would have been easy enough to have drawn an ordinary face and head; but to depict the face of the Saviour in blue ink seemed beyond me. I could find nothing on board from which to make a copy; and my remembrance of pictures seen on shore was too vague for my purpose.

In this way, for several days, the work hung with no progress. It was completely stalled for the time. Then one of the boys came forward leading "Jacko," who had not yet taken his fatal swing, and the problem solved itself.

At the moment when Jacko came along, I was sitting before Antone's bared shoulder vainly striving to begin work. The monkey leaped upon the windlass directly behind my victim and stared at me over the shoulder. For several moments he sat there, his wicked little eyes and funny grimaces unconsciously impressing my mind, until, before I realized what I was doing, the countenance of the imp was looking at me from the cross on Antone's deltoid. Then an impulse came to run a tail around

the foot of the cross and fasten it in front in the regulation manner, and the picture was done.

The effect of the work startled me and I wished it undone the instant it was completed ; but to alter it without having shown it to Frank could not be thought of. To " tickle " Frank was of all things most pleasing ; and this would " tickle him to death," I believed. So, intending to undo my work later, I started aft to find Frank.

A moment later, I saw Frank rushing toward me from the cabin gangway, his face bearing a horrified expression, while he shouted :

" *Run, Tom—look out—run !* "

Instead of running, I turned in time to dodge a knife hurled at me by the infuriated Antone.

It is doubtful if the poor fellow knew at all what he was doing. In his rage he was merely a wild animal, and his antics would have been laughable to one not involved in their sphere. To me they did not then seem so.

The knife, passing under my chin, grazed my neck in its flight, and stuck quivering in the wood of the mainmast. Then, bellowing like a bull, with staring eyes and arms working like flails, the big Portuguese rushed blindly upon me. He was too close to me to admit of my entire escape, and, thinking it folly to try to parry his blows, I dropped suddenly in front of him upon my hands and knees,

and he went sprawling over my back upon the deck. In another moment, both Frank and myself pounced upon him, and he lay helplessly bawling for help.

“What ’s up out there?” called the captain.

Frank desisted from bumping Antone’s head on the deck, to answer:

“This devil ’s—been tryin’—to do up—Tom—with a knife, sir.”

“The black ——! ’Roust the scamp along here. We ’ll see about this knifin’ business.”

We let the big fellow up and he went trembling along aft, no doubt expecting immediate punishment for his acts.

The master was not one to condemn even a Portuguese until he had heard both sides; and, summoning the steward as an interpreter, he proceeded to investigate the charge by asking for Antone’s side of the story.

The steward gathered the facts from Antone and then explained:

“Tom, he make bad thing.”

“Bad *thing*! Must have been mighty bad. What sort of a *thing*?”

“Picture, suh — picture.” The steward bared Antone’s shoulder, horror and indignation blending on his face as he pointed at my work. “See—see!” he cried.

The captain came down for a nearer look at the

picture, and then leaped back upon the quarter-deck. There, for fully half a minute, with his back turned partially toward the crew, his hands pressed upon the pit of his stomach, his body twisting in convulsions and bent almost double, his face ranging rapidly from white to purple, he stood, uttering no sound. Then he threw up his arms and shrieked:

“ Oh—oh—*oh*, Lord! Oo-oo-oo-oo-*wow-wow*! Oh, my—oh, my—my, my, my! Oh, lordy, lordy! BOWMAN! Bowman—for the love of all the angels, Bowman, *take a look* at that thing!”

Then he seemed to remember that my victim was a member of the Roman Church, whose feelings must have been cruelly outraged by my performance, and the impropriety of his own levity came over him. He recollected that he was acting as judge between Antone and me, and, stopping abruptly, said sternly:

“ He ’d have served you jest right if he ’d cut your dummed weazen, Tom. If he had, he ’d a done jest right, by ginger! If I ’d a been him, I ’d have broke your head for yeh; that ’s what I ’d have done, and served yeh fair, too. Now you go and wipe that thing out, or I ’ll have yeh strung up here and flogged. Do yeh hear? If yeh don’t git that thing fixed up putty durned quick, now, I ’ll have yeh licked until yeh know better ’n to do sech a trick

another time. *Right's right.* Pochugee or white man, right 's right, aboard here, whoever it teches, and, if you don't git that fixed up, we 'll see about it."

Then, as he took a second look at my picture, another convulsion threatened him, and he beat a hasty retreat into his cabin.

It required considerable persuasion by the other boys of the crew before Antone would let me try to undo my work; but he finally submitted, and by changing some of the lines of the head and face, and making the foot of the cross solidly blue, I managed to obliterate the worst features of the picture. Antone expressed himself as satisfied; and nothing more was ever said in my hearing about it. But it was months after that before I felt entirely safe in the big fellow's company.

"You 'll have to keep your eyes out for that son of the Church," Frank cautioned me, "or he 'll murder you some night, sure"; and I believed him.





CHAPTER XXVII

KINGS OF THE OCEAN

WE had wearied of the sunshine, so we now wearied of the fog and drip, and heartily welcomed a return of a bright sky.

"Hot but all right," the boys declared it.

There was still no breath of wind. The fog had dried up—not blown away. The air in the fore-castle was stuffy, and the most of my watch was curled up on the deck asleep, one day, when Jack's voice rang out over us from the masthead:

"*There go flu-u-ukes.*"

"Where away?" the captain demanded.

"Dead ahead, sir."

"What do you make of 'em, Mr. Brown?"

Mr. Brown had seen nothing, and said so.

"What do *you* make 'em, then?" the captain continued, looking up at Jack.

"Dunno, sir. 'T was a rouser, whatever 't was, sir. I did n't see no spout, sir. Jest his fluke."

Then he bellowed:

"Thar she blo-o-o-ows! They 're sperm whales, suh, and thunderin' big, too," he added, in great glee.

Men and boys flocked into the rigging for a sight of the whales; but minutes followed minutes until an hour had gone by and yet nothing appeared.

"I guess that old hat o' your 'n must have flopped, Jack, and you took it for a whale," Mr. Brown remarked, as he started for the deck.

"Not by a jugful, sir. I guess I know a sperm whale spout when I *see* it. There can't no old hat fool me, nuther," Jack insisted, his voice quivering with indignation.

Jack's time at the masthead expired, and he came to the deck looking puzzled and sheepish.

"I guess yeh must a stowed away some o' Pete's elixir of life, eh?" Nye threw at Jack as he reached the deck.

"No, by ginger, and I can lick any—. There she bl-o-ows!" cried Jack, abruptly ending his threat. "Thar she blo-o-ows," he repeated as a second whale spout puffed out on the water.

A dozen of us had seen the low puffs and joined in the cry. Nobody cared then who Jack could lick, and we were never enlightened further in that matter.

"Man the boats," came the order, quick and sharp.

We could now see two whales disporting on the waves some three miles from the brig, and the distance to them was quickly covered by our boats. We made our way towards them with the oars until within something like a fourth of a mile of the game, when we took to the paddles and went on in silence until almost upon them.

“ You and Brown git in back of that feller over yonder, and I ’ll look after this one over here,” the captain directed Mr. Bowman, indicating the particular “ feller ” with his hand, and speaking softly.

“ Aye, aye, sir,” came back the whispered response of the mate, and both the other boats started away from us in obedience to the order.

I now paid exclusive attention to the whale our own boat was to attack; and, for some time, saw nothing more of the other boats or of their whale.

A hundred yards from us was the hump of our game, a huge black mound, broad, rounded, glistening with moisture, rising a foot or more above the waves; and, just as the other boats moved off on their errand, an enormous gray head silently emerged from the ocean in front of the hump, extending toward us something like fifty feet. Up it came out of the sea to a height of several feet, gleaming in the sunlight, and looking more like a great boulder than a living thing; and then, with a startling crash, out rolled a cloud of dampness

from the great nostril, and the head silently sank beneath the water.

At the sound of that snort-like breath, seeming to challenge the boat to combat, every face around me became grave and stern. In every story told me on shore about fighting whales, the hero had been described as a gray-headed bull, experienced and cunning, as became his age. Here was the gray head and the tremendous proportions which bespoke the fighting bull, and, expecting him to maintain the reputation of his tribe, the men were nerving themselves for the coming struggle. It remained to be seen whether this particular whale was possessed of the wisdom and pluck commonly ascribed to his kind.

The eye of the sperm whale is placed so far back and low down upon the side of his body that he can see nothing that is either directly in front of or behind him; and this defect in his anatomical make-up works greatly to his disadvantage in his fights with whalers. Unless the boat happens to be on one side or the other of the animal, he cannot determine its whereabouts; while, even if he does catch sight of the boat, before he can turn his unwieldy frame to strike with jaw, head, or fluke, the boat is somewhere else. Hence, given an active crew, headed by a prudent and intelligent officer, and the whale has little chance of a victory over

his foe. We were fully aware of our advantage in this respect, and governed our movements accordingly.

As the animal sank under the waves after taking his breath, he came gliding slowly toward us under the water, quite unsuspecting of his danger, until he was close upon the boat.

“ Send 'er a leetle, boys,” the captain whispered to us.

Not to alarm the animal, we dipped our paddles cautiously, and, just as the head was emerging for another breath, the boat slipped alongside of it so near that we could have touched it with our hands.

With no more appearance of excitement than he would have shown on the deck of the brig, Jim stood awaiting the order of the master, harpoon in hand, while the boat slid along back beside the great mountain of flesh something like half its length, and then :

“ Give it to 'im, Jim,” the captain hissed.

And, before the astonished brute could swerve, two harpoons had been buried in his blubber.

We were not long held in suspense as to the result of this attack. The great head sank under the boat ; sheets of water and spray hid the mighty fluke in mid-air ; and a hundred tons of animal matter plunged into the deep.

The sulphur bottom was longer and larger than

was this whale, but his movements failed to impress me as did this dive. The easy flippancy of the yellow whale had suggested lightness. His agility had been wonderful, but not awe-inspiring. He had gone suddenly, almost without a ripple, with no resounding spank on the ocean, no silent, smooth gliding of his body. There had been an instantaneous flash, and the whale had gone.

The sperm whale gave us ample time to note his tremendous proportions, moved with a ponderous gravity befitting so royal a creature, and left in the minds of the beholders a sense of weight and power that compelled our awe. As became a king, he started amidst the roar of great guns and a mighty upheaval of the ocean, and then slipped swiftly, silently away.

"Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z," sang the line following the whale for a few seconds and then stopped. A moment later, the monster head once more appeared, and with the ponderous movement appropriate to its dimensions, rose until the eye could be seen staring above the water. For several seconds the whale stood there erect, exposing the long rows of ivory tusks, ominously glistening in the sunbeams, and turning gravely as if surveying the scene, while the long under jaw dropped lower and lower until finally it hung almost at a right angle with its fellow. So widely was that mouth opened, it

looked as if the brig might be inserted between those jaws. Then, after perhaps ten seconds, the animal seemed satisfied, and, snapping his jaw viciously shut, settled with the same ponderous motion back under the waves.

In the meantime, in order to be able to dodge quickly, we had resumed our oars, and the captain and Jim had exchanged ends in the boat. The whale-line was hanging limp from its chock, and, from that circumstance, we knew the whale was not running from us. We felt sure he was at that moment coming toward us under the water, and that we were in for a dangerous fight.

The succeeding seconds were moments of supreme anxiety to us. So long as the whale was in sight, we could hope to outwit or dodge him; but the idea of his coming at us from below was not pleasant. We could face an open attack from him without flinching; but a hidden enemy of his powers was just cause for us to quake.

"Can yeh see 'im, sir?" asked Jim, his face white, but with no quaver of voice.

"No—dog-gone it, no! The light shines so it's hard to make 'im out under the water," the captain answered, with the slightest possible shake of tone.

Then, scarcely the length of the boat from us, suddenly towering high above our heads, the whale came headed straight for the boat in one of his

lunging leaps. There seemed no possibility of escaping him.

"Gosh!" Jim gasped, but made no effort to swing the boat out of way of the oncoming beast.

"Hy—*hy* there!" screamed the captain, just as he would have done at a charging ox.

Not an oar was stirred in the boat. To dodge seemed useless. The only hope of escape seemed to lie outside, and the boat would have been minus its men in another second, had not the whale sunk as quickly as he had risen and gone on beneath it.

We had escaped by the breadth of a hair. If the whale had come on two feet farther our boat must have been crushed to atoms. As it was, by jabbing the boat hook into the ugly head and pushing on it with all his might, the captain had succeeded in shoving the bow to one side, and the collision had been avoided.

"I swun!" exclaimed Jim, sinking back on his seat with a relieved sigh.

"I swow to goodness, but he come nigh to doin' it that time," the captain muttered.

"I vow, Tom, I never thought we 'd git clear so, did you?" whispered the tub oarsman in my ear.

And after that, all of us breathed more freely, while we watched the brute towing us in his wake.

If this whale in his first dash meant mischief to us, he was certainly easily discouraged and at once

abandoned the idea. His next move leads me to think his sole object had been to join his companion in flight, and that while he stood erect before us he was engaged in locating the other whale rather than the whereabouts of the boat.

In the meantime, Mr. Bowman had fastened to the other whale, and when we turned to watch for the reappearance of our foe after his dive under the boat, that one was just starting away for a run. A moment later, our whale threw his mighty head into the air, headed with all his speed in pursuit of his mate; and from that time until they finally gave up the struggle from exhaustion, both whales exerted themselves to the utmost in trying to keep out of our way.

It would be more agreeable to follow the usual course of writers on this subject here and record a desperate battle with these bulls; but the plain truth is that neither of them showed any serious disposition to fight us. It seemed to me they were rank cowards, and my respect for the sperm whale as a fighter never afterwards recovered its original state.

But I shall not here digress to fully state my opinion of the character of these whales as courageous, aggressive, or persevering animals. It is sufficient to say now that, in my judgment, they have been considerably overrated, and to defer any further remarks on the subject to some later chapter.

Our whale continued to run on behind the other one for some time, and then, just as his companion threw up his flukes and sounded, stopped and awaited our will.

The captain was not a convert to my ideas concerning the courage of our game, and ordered our approach upon the beast with much more than his usual caution. Instead of directing us to pull up to him by the line, as was almost always done after a whale had laid to, the tub and midship oarsmen were told to row us to the animal; and then, as we went slowly along toward the monster, the bow oarsman pulled the line in the boat, and I coiled it carefully at the stern, ready to be let out on the jump should occasion demand. Nor did we move directly upon the whale as was usually done; but, instead, we made a detour to come up behind him, out of range of his eye; and then, when we were near enough to begin work, in place of going boldly on and plunging his lance into the black side, the captain announced rather nervously:

“ I guess I 'd better shoot 'im.”

After that he waited some minutes before firing at the animal.

“ The deuced critter lays so darned deep, likely 's not 't won't do no good to shoot,” I heard him muttering behind me.

At last came the roar of the gun, but no com-

mand to "stern" followed. The whale lay like a wooden thing, quite undisturbed by the bomb, which had either failed to explode, or, exploding, had done no material harm in the broad back of the animal. A second and a third shot was fired with no better result, and then, in evident contempt for it, the captain laid aside his gun.

"Guess I 'll have to kill him with the lances after all. These here guns may be good for suthin'—they be all right when a whale lays up out o' water where yeh can hit 'im; but yeh 'll never kill *this* one with the danged thing. He lays like a dummed log, and don't roll a bit. Put me on to 'im, Jim," the captain ordered.

Jim gave us the signal to pull up easy, and the boat glided in toward and past the fluke of the whale on one side.

"There—that 's nigh enough. Keep 'er so."

We dropped our oars and checked the headway of the boat.

"Ugh-ugh-ugh!" the captain grunted, throwing his lance. "That 's more like, now, hain't it! Ugh-ugh-ugh! After you 've said and done it all, there hain't nothin' like a good lance to work on a whale with."

By this time it had become clear to all of us that there was no fight in the whale. It was merely a question of how soon the lance would reach a vital part.

“ Ugh-ugh-ugh!” the captain continued, until tired of working from a distance, he shouted:

“ Hang it all, Jim, git me up there where I can *reach* ’im, will yeh!”

In another moment, as the boat rose and fell with the waves, its bow actually grazed the side of the whale.

“ There—that ’ll do fust rate. Jest hold ’er right there a spell, boys.”

So far, the creature had paid no attention to the thrusts of the lance, but when the boat came scraping down on his side he seemed to grow uneasy, and rolling heavily in his bed brought his great side flipper well up toward the surface of the water, close beside the captain. In went the long lance its full length just back of the huge fin, and then, before the return roll of the great body could compel him to desist, the captain churned his weapon in and out several times among the very vitals of the beast.

A shiver running along the great frame of the animal warned the observant Jim that the death blow had been given, and he shouted to us:

“ Stern—*stern*, boys!”

Then we pushed quickly back out of danger and lay watching the brute in his final throes.

As I turned to look at the whale, the head was coming silently up from the water, and in a moment a broad red stream welled from the nostril.

He was spouting his life blood, and our work was done.

The animal was fully eighty feet long, with a body that was clumsy in its proportions for even so great a length, while his weight would have exceeded the combined weight of any thirty elephants. Yet, with a sudden, twisting jerk, the whole of that enormous mass was whirled clear out of the water, and with a terrible smashing swash fell over on its side. The next instant the sun was obscured by swishing spray, the heavens rang with the resounding blows of the mighty flukes, the ocean boiled as a great cauldron, in the midst of which the black monster leaped, plunged, and floundered like a flapping fish.

It was a spectacle impossible of description; one to be seen and *felt*, but not to be pictured. We were all a-gape—dumb. Not a sound escaped any man, not an oar was moved, and until, a minute later, the great beast subsided in death, we sat, living statues. Then we recovered our voices:

“Do they do that often, sir?” I asked.

“No, my boy, not often—they don’t gen’rally jump clean out like that; but I’ve seen ’em do it afore. I saw one of ’em whap over once—jest end over end he went—slap down on to a boat, and by gum there wa’ n’t enough left of that boat, nor the men nuther, to bother with,” the captain replied.

As we looked around us to see what had become of the other boats, the companion to our whale, who had been seeking an avenue of escape in the depths below, was just rising a few hundred yards away ; and, hastily cutting the line that still held us to the dead whale, we headed our boat for him. We were nearer to the animal than either of the other boats and reached him before they did.

This whale was as large and long as the one we had killed, and as we came to him we found him lying squarely on his back, his grayish-white belly dazzlingly bright, but too deeply buried in the water to be successfully pierced by our lances. The under jaw, about half extended, was standing obliquely up from the water at one end of him, and his wide fluke could be seen lying flatwise just under the waves at the other, while his body bent downward like a bow. We could have easily passed between the jaws of the animal with the boat and not have disturbed his rest, and while he laid there we did actually cross over the middle of his body.

"No use. He 's too deep to git at 'im. We 'll have to wait 'til he rolls over, o' suthin'. 'T ain't no good to prick 'im," the captain informed us.

A moment later the animal rolled slowly over, apparently taking no heed of a lance thrust given him by the captain as his dark side was exposed to

our boat, but quietly raising his head for a breath of air.

By this time the mate had arrived on the opposite side of the whale, and each boat lay above and near a side paddle. Mr. Brown was just rowing up from behind the animal with a view to assisting in the work of killing him.

The tail of the creature was now lying rather deep in the water, where it need not have been touched by the oars, but the animal seemed so docile and like the one we had already killed that the boat-steerer in the boat of Mr. Brown became careless. A whale may bear prodding with the sharpened blade of a lance and yet resent any undue familiarity by an oar with his fluke, as was quickly demonstrated to us. The big steering oar was allowed to sink until it rubbed along upon the fluke, with consequences that should have been foreseen by the officer. In an instant that tail rose under the boat and the second mate with all his crew were soused into the sea. For a second the boat stood on one end, then toppled over upon one side, shattered and leaking, but not irreparable, after which it righted and floated away.

The men were badly shaken up and frightened, but no one had been seriously hurt. They had suffered a tip-up, and that was all. The kick of the fluke sent the whale forward out of the way, and,



"FOR A SECOND THE BOAT STOOD ON ONE END."

[illegible]

being unencumbered with any line, our boat went to the rescue of the swimmers. In a few minutes we had hauled them all from the water and put them back into their own boat, where we left them to pick up what they could find of its equipments floating about them, and returned to the animal which lay awaiting us.

"Mebbe them darned fools 'll learn to keep off of a fluke like that after they 've been h'isted half a dozen times," the captain growled.

The readiness of the brute to kick at trifles made the captain more cautious than he had been in his former approach, and we kept at a safer distance, from which it was decided to try the guns again.

It would have been easy to shoot the bombs into the huge black hump that lay glistening in the sunlight, but it would have been a waste of materials. The bombs were expensive, our supply limited, and the guns were sure to kick. It was cheaper and less inconvenient to wait. This whale seemed to lie higher in the water than his mate had done, and the chance of getting a fatal shot at him was better.

We had not long to wait before a receding wave coinciding with some movement of the body brought an enormous expanse of black skin above the waves, when the captain fired. The bomb had been well aimed, and we knew from the sudden

lifting of the animal in his bed and a peculiar tremulous wave passing the length of his great body, that it had done its work.

Jim bellowed his "Stern all," and we backed off.

The next instant the animal had flopped over upon one side, where he lay five or ten minutes, opening and shutting his jaws like the blades of mammoth scissors, with rapid snaps. Then, sending the water flying in the air, back again he whirled; and in another second a mottled white head leaped sixty feet into the sky, and the animal fell upon his back dead. Within twenty minutes from the time the bomb entered his body the gentle ripple of the water upon the sides of our boats was the only sound about us.

A little later the brig hove to beside the other whale, and, taking the line still fast to the second animal, we rowed to her.

"Putty good day's work this is, boys—a putty dummed good day's work and no mistake about it. This is what yeh call whalin', this is," the captain assured us as we rowed along.





CHAPTER XXVIII

WORK—CALCULATIONS—JUNKS AND CASES

DURING the next two weeks after the capture of those whales we labored incessantly. Two hours of each twenty-four was all that could be allowed to us for rest. It was of the greatest importance that the oil be preserved, and that could be done only by working every man to the limit of his powers. The sun was hot, and from the start the oil commenced running out of the blubber upon the decks, much of it escaping into the sea, while over the side swarms of sharks kept themselves busy robbing us of the treasure. Every hour of delay was costing us gold, and we worked with might and main to save the most of it.

One morning, near the last of this work, I overheard the captain saying to Mr. Bowman:

“ Three men short to-day.”

“ Ye-ah. Yeh don’t s’pose any of ’em are shirkin’, do yeh ? ”

“ No. I ’ve looked ’em over myself. They ’re

used up, ev'ry one of 'em, jest clean and straight. I 'll bet it hain't been less 'n a hundred anywhere on the brig sence we begun—it 's too darned hot to work like this, that 's all that ails 'em. No, they 're done up honest, and can't do no more." Then he added, " Wa-al, I 'm mighty glad it 's most done."

The day after we had stowed the final drop of oil in the hold, Frank met me in the waist:

" How much do yeh guess we got ? " he asked.

" Oh, I s'pose about two hundred, did n't we ? The way we 've worked, it ought to be about ten times that," I said.

" Wa-al, Tom, you 're a Yankee all right, but you 're half a barrel under the mark, my boy. Them whales went two hundred and a half barrels jest to the pint," he declared.

" A hundred barrels a-piece, and oil enough left to grease the ways, eh ? "

" Yessuh. A hundred barrels a-piece, good measure," he replied.

" That makes a pretty good haul, don't it. Let 's see. The hundred and twentieth part of two hundred is—is—two into—twenty twelfths—four into—four into—that makes five thirds. My share is five thirds of a barrel, Frank. What do you think the stuff 's worth, now we 've got it ? "

" Ninety cents a gallon, the old man says—'bout thirty dollars a barrel."

“ Uh-huh, that ’s about what I thought. Well, let ’s see — five thirds of thirty is—. Say, Frank, how much do you suppose I ’ve *made* killing myself here with work, the last two weeks. What will it come to, all reckoned up ? ”

“ I ’ll be blessed if I know. Your figgers git ahead of *me*.”

“ Well, I ’ve made just *fifty* dollars! ”

“ *Gee!* Hain’t it more ’n that ? Be yeh sure yeh got that *right* ? Darn it, it must be more ’n that, hain’t it ? ”

“ Risked our precious necks killing the brutes, and then dragged ourselves to shadows trying their plaguey oil, and that ’s just what it comes to to the half a cent. If yeh don’t believe it, figger it yourself.”

Then, working his tongue as a calculator, with a piece of paper spread upon his knee, Frank worked out the problem in pencil marks, finally turning to me:

“ No, Tom, you ’re off. I *knew* that could n’t be right. You left off *twelve cents*. It ’s mighty certain we can’t trust you to figger up for *us*. No siree, you ’ll have to go to school some more. You left off twelve cents for that *half barrel*. No suh, that sort o’ figgerin’ never ’ll do aboard here.”

Then he poked me in the ribs and went aft, but presently returned :

“ S’pose you reckon up an’ see what the old man an’ Macy have made out o’ this, jest for fun, Tom.”

“ What ’s their lay ? ”

“ They both git the same. Yeh see Macy ain’t what yeh might call responsible all the time. You remember how ’t was back there at Pete’s—he ’s liable to take a drop too many when in port, and they won’t give ’im a ship, but he ’s about the best whaleman goin’, so they give him the same lay as the old man gits. They both git a *sixth*.”

“ Gosh! *That* is n’t quite so bad, is it? Well, let ’s see. You can figure in the half barrel while I ’m tussling with the rest of it. That ’s a little too *fine* for my head. Let ’s see now—six times two—thirty-three and a third. Thirty times thirty-three and a third is—. Sure as you ’re born, Frank, those fellows have made a thousand dollars a-piece,” I declared, not a little shocked at the great disparity between the pay of the officers and the rest of the crew.

“ Wa-al, I vum, that ’s meaner ’n pussly, that is. I would n’t mind if ’t wa’n’t more ’n four or five times as much as the boys git, but *twenty* times—*Jerusalem!* that ain’t right,” said Frank.

The whales we had cut up differed from the other sperm whales we had killed only in sex, size, and thickness of the blubber. They were about equal in their own dimensions, and the very largest of

their kind. No effort was made to keep the oil of one separate from that of the other while trying it out, so that we were unable to tell which yielded the larger quantity. A few barrels of the oil was lost from leakage through the scupper holes, but probably not more than is usual on such occasions. A hundred-barrel sperm whale is regarded by whalers as a big one, and no one on board our vessel had seen one that produced more than a hundred and ten barrels. A recent writer speaks of killing a sperm whale that yielded a hundred and fifty barrels; but, if he is not mistaken in his figures, he certainly came across a rare specimen of the tribe.

The bowheads of the Arctic Ocean, rarely reaching seventy feet in length, are much fatter than the sperm whale, and sometimes yield two or even three hundred barrels of oil, perhaps; but no whaler with whom I have ever talked has told me of a sperm whale that made even a hundred and twenty-five barrels of oil.

The junks of these whales were so bulky that we could not hoist them from the water to the decks without first cutting them into pieces. One of those pieces exceeded twenty feet in length, and at one of its ends was so thick, that standing on tiptoe beside it, I was unable to reach its top. These masses were so saturated with oil that the slightest

pressure upon them would cause the oil to trickle down their surfaces in streams.

The cases, too, were unusually large, so that we bailed twelve barrels of oil from one and eleven from the other by means of buckets, and even that difference would not have occurred between them but for an odd incident.

Before the junk in which it was imbedded was hoisted in on board, the case in the first head was emptied of its oil without any mishap. Then the second head was placed in position under the gangway in the middle of the bulwarks of the brig for work upon the second case; and Jim was ordered down upon it. He quickly cut an opening into the case large enough to admit of bailing it out, and had soon taken out perhaps half its contents. Then, in order to expedite his work, he got down into the case and stood there waist deep in oil to finish dipping it out.

At the cutting in of whales the sharks usually get hold of enough refuse meat to partially satisfy their appetites, and, in consequence, they make few serious attempts to reach the men engaged upon the work. For this reason the men are apt to pay too little heed to the presence of these wolves, and sometimes incur unnecessary dangers from them.

As Jim went down upon this head a number of small sharks were gathered near it, where they

continued to swim or lay about, feasting their wicked little eyes upon him for some time before venturing to come nearer. Then they began creeping bashfully closer, and occasionally one of them would run his nose up on to the head within a few inches of Jim's foot, when he would be savagely cut by a spade from above, or the boat-steerer would stop long enough to jab the nose with his knife. But as the work proceeded, both Jim and the officers became so absorbed in it that the sharks were forgotten and allowed to do as they pleased. No one thought of danger to Jim in the sack. Every man was occupied in attending to his own business with no thought for the fishes.

In this way the sharks, finding themselves unmolested, gathered in a great swarm about the head, almost within reach of Jim.

"Give me a leetle more——"

The request was cut short. One of the smaller sharks, either crowded up from below by his fellows, or making a rush at Jim and missing his aim, had slipped inside the case with the boat-steerer.

It is hard to say which was the more surprised or frightened—the shark or the man. Jim gave utterance to a blood-curdling screech and scrambled out of the sack and up on deck, leaving the shark to waste our oil. For some minutes the shark demonstrated his ability to bail oil without the aid of a

bucket, before he could be hooked out of the case. It was rather too costly an exhibition for our officers to enjoy, but for the rest of us it was great fun.

From the corners of their mouths to the free ends, the under jaws of these whales were something like eighteen feet long, and each was provided with twenty-four pairs of excellent ivory teeth. Away down on each side, fully twenty feet back from the front of the head, were the eyes, looking little larger than those of an ox, although in fact considerably larger; and scarcely more than twelve inches farther back on the sides were the little holes representing their ears. The diameters of the bodies of the whales at the largest parts were certainly not less than thirteen feet, and the total length of each of them was, as already stated, fully eighty feet.

But it is useless to pursue such figures. No description can place these animals before an inexperienced mind. You may measure off the distances and dimensions as given, fill them in by your imagination with flesh, bones, and skin, just as they were, and still the sensations produced by the presence of the living animal will not be there. No mere dead thing of fact or fancy can ever induce the feelings caused by beholding the living monster. The ease, the grace, the ponderous motions of the beast as he moves in the ocean, even the magnitude of his body,

are all things not conceivable by the mind until they have been seen; and much less may that indefinable, subtle influence which accompanies his presence be imagined.

No intelligent man, be he never so brave or experienced as a whaler, can approach a full-grown, live sperm bull whale without a sense of awe, not necessarily because of any timidity or cowardice in the nature of the man, but because of the impression of irresistible power conveyed by the form and movements of the animal, and the feeling of utter hopelessness of effectually opposing the creature.

One of these whales rushed toward us and every man sat spell bound. What effect might have been wrought upon our minds if we had been so near to him while in his death flurry cannot be known. As he went in that inevitable circle, leaping, whirling, tossing, and jerking, enveloped in foam and spray, he looked the personification of fury. It seemed the limit of animal force. A man placed in close proximity with it could never afterwards depict his feelings; it would so paralyze his faculty of observation that no true recollection of what he saw could survive.





CHAPTER XXIX

DANGER FROM SCURVY—LAND—A VERY CLOSE SHAVE

AFTER the events of the last chapters we cruised for five months on those grounds, and killed a number of sperm whales, adding about three hundred barrels to our stock of oil. Only one of these whales was a bull, and, like the others, he failed to maintain the reputation of his kind. He was something over seventy feet in length, and made us eighty-five barrels of oil, but he did not fight. All the other whales were cows, making us anywhere from fifteen up to fifty barrels of oil each. Their performances were so similar to those of the animals already spoken of that no account of them would be interesting here. Not a boat was damaged or man injured by any of them.

We had been thus cruising all that time, without once seeing land or sail, when Kenney called to us down the forecastle gangway, varying his usual announcement of "Kid here," by shouting:

“ *Salt* horse, here.”

Nye mounted the steps to receive our rations. “ What ’s the matter that there hain’t no per-taters ? ” he asked.

“ ’Cause there hain’t none, that ’s what ’s the matter! ”

“ You ’re lyin’ and yeh know it. I seen some this mornin’ in the galley.”

“ Them ’s for the *cabin*.”

“ What are *we* goin’ to do, then ? ”

“ Dunno. Go without, I s’pose. Them ’s my orders, and that ’s all the’ is about it.”

Kenney went his way and Nye came down with the tub.

As he set the kid on my trunk, Nye grumbled: “ This is a mighty putty how to do, this is, by thunder! No pertaters, no lime juice, no *nothin’* twixt us and *scurvy*, by ginger. If ’t wa’n’t for the *worms* in it, we would n’t git none too much hard-tack nuther—they ’d hog *that* for the cabin, too. Bet y’r life, they don’t go without nothin’ they want aft—not by a jugful, they don’t. If there ’s any sort of shortage, *we* ’ve got to stand it; them fellers hain’t goin’ to, you can bet y’r life.”

It was evident, if the crew was to be preserved from disease much longer, new supplies must be secured from land. So long as the potatoes held out we would be free from scurvy, but without

them, or some vegetable substitute for them, it would be a matter of only a few weeks before the dread scourge might be expected to appear among us. This fact was recognized in the cabin as well as by us in the forecabin, and the next day after the supply of potatoes became limited to the officers' table, our course was set for the coast of Africa. With the first peep at the line marking the dark continent, some three days later, our grumbling ceased, and we could talk of nothing but land.

We soon came opposite a long, sandy beach inviting a landing, and the brig hove to something more than a mile from shore. There was no harbor. The beach faced the open sea and we must get to it through the thundering surf; nor was there any sign of human habitation to be seen. We were a few hundred miles south of Cape Frio, far from any town.

Two boats were lowered and landed without any accident, and the captain instructed us:

"Keep your eyes out for lemons, limes, bananas, or anything o' that sort yeh see. 'T ain't likely we 'll find any yams or potatoes along here, but we 've got to git suthin' green to eat, or some of yeh 'll be gittin' sick. We can stave it off on lime juice prob'bly 'til we git in somewhere where they 've got suthin' better. Look sharp, boys, and we 'll be all right."

So we scattered in groups of two or three boys to search for the desired fruit.

The first thing of greater interest than the land itself to meet my gaze was a green lizard that suddenly darted to the top of a boulder near me. The reptile was probably eighteen inches long and perfectly harmless, but to me his appearance was more startling than that of any whale.

In an instant I had cast a stone at the creature, and was on the run for the beach.

Mr. Bowman was coming up from the shore and met me. "What 's up, Tom?" he asked.

"There 's a blamed boa-constrictor or something of that sort up yonder," I declared. Then another lizard ran in front of us and clambered upon a rock not far from us, and sat there blinking his little black eyes. "No, 't ain't; there 's one of 'em now," I exclaimed. "Are th' they poison, though?"

"No-o-o. Them things don't never hurt nobody. Come along back." But the mate, as well as myself, sheered a little in passing the rock on which the reptile was perched.

During the next hour we must have seen twenty of these lizards, of various sizes and colors, darting about among the trees and rocks like squirrels. It as difficult for us to reconcile their looks with innocence, and many stones were thrown at them with

no particular result beyond frightening the creatures. We made no other attempts to capture any of them.

“ They make a feller *crawl*, from his hair down to ’s toe-nails, jest to look at ’em,” Jack said; and his views were generally shared by the rest of our crew.

We soon came into an open space of perhaps ten acres, in which a grain much like wheat was growing wild. In the centre of this field a raised platform had been built of poles, upon which a black woman was standing. As is the fashion in that country, she was dressed principally in nothing, but was armed with a sling such as boys play with in America, and was engaged in throwing stones at birds that lit in the grain. If she had been inclined to be hostile, she could have made us very uncomfortable by the use of that sling, for her aim seemed sure for long distances; but the moment that she caught sight of us, she gave vent to one piercing cry, and, leaping from the platform, ran for the woods. We saw no more of her or of any native.

At last a lime tree was discovered and our object in landing attained. We stripped several bagfuls of fruit from the tree, paying full tribute to its thorns while doing so, and then returned to the beach.

The hurried flight of the woman we had scared

suggested an unfriendly feeling for us on the part of her people, and, anticipating a disagreeable visit from them, we hastened to launch the boats through the surf and made our way out to the brig.

After that, for some days, we sailed in a northerly direction, keeping in full sight of the sandy, barren-looking hills of the coast, not wishing to leave them. Then one day, just as the sun was going down, offering no excuse or explanation to any of us, the captain ordered a more westerly course, one that we felt sure would take us out of sight of land before morning.

This lack of conference between the master and his crew came near to costing us all our lives. Every man of that crew hated to lose sight of the coast. Dreary enough to look upon, no more than a hazy blue bank in the distance, it might be, but every man of us loved it. The thought of leaving it was like the tearing asunder of pleasant ties to us. I know that while I stood my own trick at the wheel that evening the head of the brig was often allowed to rest for a minute at a time fully a point east of the prescribed course. I did not deliberately steer away from the course, but, if the bow did happen to swing off toward the shore a little, the same haste to swing it back was not exercised as when it happened to swing off shore. I could not patiently bear the thought of not seeing land in the

coming morning. By confession made afterwards to me, I know that several of the other boys not only did as I did, but wilfully disobeyed the orders; and, taking care not to be caught at it by the officers, changed the course to suit their wishes. Had we known the reason for the change of course that had been made, there would have been no danger of any such mistake.

We were making passage and every sail was spread. The moon shone round and silvery in the heavens and we dashed along before the half gale over a whitecapped sea. It was a breeze and a night to make a sailor happy; and, as our watch retired to the forecastle at eight o'clock that evening, we were in fine spirits. We had sufficient reason for rejoicing in that we were on the way to fresh water and fruits.

I had been asleep some hours while the brig had been sailing a ten-knot pace, when I was aroused by the terrible cry:

“ All hands on deck. *Breakers* ahead! ”

No alarm more appalling to him is ever given a sailor than this.

As we scrambled to the deck and looked out over the bow a white sheet of foam could be seen climbing a huge black tower half a mile ahead of the brig, and an ominous rumbling roar greeted our ears. High above the boulders and on into the air that

spray dashed, gleamed, and sparkled in the moonlight, and then fell as it had come, to expose a long line of jagged rocks. The rushing waters, the roaring surge of that flood, the towering blackness of the heights, the brilliant moonbeams silvering the raging sea, all combined to make a scene beautiful beyond the hopes of any artist, sublime beyond the conception of any poet; but its beauty, its sublimity, its grandeur, its very music, only added to its fascinating horror in our minds.

There was but a moment to glance at all this, and then, clear and resonant above the thundering of the surf, we heard the voice of Mr. Bowman:

“Man the forebraces.”

As we tugged at the ropes the foreyards flew around.

“Well—*belay* that.”

“Well, sir. Belay, sir.”

We might have been on exhibition, so prompt and exact had been our work.

Then a great white wave rolled in on deck and I felt myself lifted from my feet. A bubbling gurgle sounded in my ears, and I went floating helplessly away, with my lifetime passing before me in review. It could not have been longer than a second, but in that moment a multitude of remembrances had flashed through my brain and my body had been resigned to its fate, when my hand caught

something and clung to it. The next instant I was looking out again over the raging waters, clinging to the fore shrouds ten feet above the lee rail, ready to battle once more for life.

The brig was rising high upon a mountainous wave that swept past us on to the rocks, and then she settled down, down, down into the dark, cavernous water, until a jarring shock told us of the rocks beneath. A second roller dashed over the vessel and for a brief instant she was forced to her beam; then she shook herself free, righted, met, and mounted a terrific avalanche of water hurled upon her by the ocean.

As we came to the top of that mighty wave we could see the streams, glistening and bright, trickling down the sides of the huge boulders, and for one awful moment listened for the crash that would seal our doom. For an instant we hung, hovering over that foaming cauldron between life and death, and then, with every sail filled by the gale, the brig took one triumphant leap out from the shore into the open sea, beyond the outermost rock of Cape Frio, and, with the booming reverberations of the tumbling surf rapidly receding behind us, we were safe.

The pumps were hastily manned to ascertain whether harm had been done by the rocks we had struck; and then, when the spitting at the spout

assured us there was no water in the hold, our tongues found vent:

"Mebbe yeh think yeh can ketch this old brig nappin'!" cried one, shaking his fist at the boulders still looming behind us.

"That old white-whiskered chap 'll wait a spell yit for 'is man pie, I guess. He thought he had us, though, by jings if he did n't," another declared.

So it went, nearly all of us having something of like weight to offer, until some one noticed the absence of our Portuguese shipmates.

"All hands aft and answer to your names," shouted the captain.

The roll was called and the four Portuguese failed to make response. They were not on the deck.

"That 's funny. Queer that we should come in here jest to drop them fellers, ain't it. Some of yeh see if yeh can't find them fellers somewheres," directed Mr. Bowman.

Jack ran to the forecastle and quickly returned, holding on to his sides:

"The'—haw, haw, haw—they 're all—he, he, he—they 're all down in—in the foc'sle, sir, a—haw, haw, haw—a-countin' them darned beads, sir. Oh, oh, oh! but you 'd oughter hear 'em goin' of it," he reported.

To the surprise of everybody, the captain received the report without a show of anger, and, directing an

examination as to the condition of the decks, turned abruptly and went down into the cabin.

The cook-house had been torn partly loose from its fastenings, and was somewhat askew on the deck. A heavy grindstone had been washed out of its frame and overboard. The mate's boat was badly shattered, and several oars had disappeared from the other boats. Many smaller things that had been lying loose on the decks were subsequently missed and charged to the account of that night. But no irreparable damage had been done to the vessel, and, aside from a few bruises, all the men were safe.

The next day, during his watch and when he should have remained on deck, Jack came into the forecastle pretending to look for his pipe, but in reality to unburden his mind to me. He seated himself on my chest below our bunk, and, speaking low so as not to disturb the sleepers around us, began:

“ Tom—Tom, asleep ? ”

“ No-o-o,” I whispered. “ What 's up ? ”

“ Did yeh know the old man flunked last night ? ”

“ *Flunked!* Pshaw ! ”

“ That 's jest what he done—clean flunked,” he persisted.

“ Oh, *fudge!* Clear out and let us *sleep*, Jack. That 's all bosh,” I declared, showing my impatience.

“ No, 't ain't bosh, nuther. I know jest what I'm talkin' about. True 's your alive he did—he flunked,” Jack went on.

“ I happened to be at the wheel when that durned rock fust loomed up. I guess the forrard lookout must have been asleep, o' suthin'. Anyhow, all to wunst I heered a ' boo-oo-oo-oom-m-m,' and looked ahead and seen that dummed foam runnin' up there. Gee *whilikens*! Hey! Did n't it make a feller cree-ep, though. But I hain't talkin' about that now.

“ I stuck my head down the cabin gangway and I yells a-whoopin': ' Breakers slap ahead, an' we 're right a-top of 'em!' Yeh see, Jim and Brown must have been gassin' som'ers—they wa' n't nuther one on 'em in sight nowheres, and there wa' n't no time to wait for orders, so I jest ups an' hollers that way down the gangway.

“ Wa-al, 't wa' n't two shakes of a lamb's tail after I 'd hollered afore the old man come a-scootin' up them steps. He takes one look, quick like, and then he grabs the wheel and gives me a push that mighty nigh sent me over it.

“ ‘ Here you! *Gimme* this!’ he yells.

“ You know how he is when he 's hot. ‘ Here, you,’ he yells, ‘ gimme this!’ jest that way.

“ After he 'd drove me off from the wheel, he took another look ahead, and—. Wa-al, suh, yeh

could jest *see* him wilt. In a half a secont, he looked like a dumb idiot—looked jest as if he did n't know nothin', by gum.

“ Jest then up comes old Bowman, yawnin' and pullin' on his coat, as cool like as if nothin' had n't happened and wa 'n't goin' to happen. He looks ahead at the breakers for a secont, and then he looks at the old man standing there at the wheel a-gapin', and then, all to wunst, he rips out:

“ ‘ — — — — be you goin' to stand there like a durned fool and *do* nothin'? ’ jest like that.

“ Wa-al, suh, the old man did n't open a peeper—did n't so much as look 'round, but jest stood there with his mouth wide open and his eyes a-comin' out of his blamed head a-lookin' at them rocks and a-steerin' us straight for 'em, by jinks. Yes, suh, he was just a-headin' square into the middle of 'em, by ginger!

“ Old Bowman looks at him kinder cur'ous for a jiffy, and then he yells to you fellers forrard to man the braces, and then he steps up to the old man and bellers suthin' in his ear that I could n't quite ketch.

“ That seemed to bring the old man to a bit, for he sent that wheel 'round a-whizzin', but yeh could see by the way he acted he was rattled yit.

“ After that old Bowman jest hustled—*you* know. Jim and Brown had got waked up afore that and things was gittin' too darned lively to keep any sort

of track of. Jiminy! but hain't old Macy got a bugle on 'im, though! I'll bet them niggers that was a-waitin' for us ashore back there could hear 'im when he hollered.

"Wa-al, we got the spanker hauled in where she b'longed, and you fellers forrard got things to pullin' all right there, and then we tumbled into that fust trough and *you* got h'isted. Don't b'lieve yeh 've forgot *that*, have yeh?" And Jack grinned over the edge of the bunk at me.

"We got out of that all hunky and was a-settlin' into the next one, when a reg'lar old sock-dolliger come a-pilin' up higher, and higher, and higher, 'till I swow, it looked as if the whole dummed ocean was comin' in a-top of us. It did look owly, and no mistake. By gum, but it did look owly enough, and that was when the old man *flunked*."

By this time I was interested, and, resting on my elbows, lay looking down upon Jack, who went eagerly on:

"I'll tell yeh what he done—then see if he did n't flunk. He jest natchully left that wheel and climbed head over heels into the mate's boat. That 's jest what he done, by ginger! Yessuh, left the wheel and piled into that boat, and *stayed* there; and if old Bowman had n't grabbed that wheel and flung 'er back we 'd a been beggin' St. Peter to take us off of that rock out o' the cold. That 's what

we 'd a been a-doin' afore yeh could say ' Jack Robinson,'—jest a-beggin' for a berth in the good place, by ginger."

Jack stopped and we remained silent for a moment before he resumed:

" Too all-fired bad, wa' n't it! Somehow I allers s'posed the old man was grit clean through, and I 'll be darned if I hain't sorry this thing happened. If it had n't been for that, we 'd never known he could be so scart."

He paused as if expecting me to say something, and then suddenly asked:

" Did yeh ever see *me* scart, Tom ? "

" No. Not as I know of. Why ? "

" I was jest wonderin', that 's all. A feller don't allers *show* ev'rything he *feels*, does 'e ? "

I was not ready to reply before he went on:

" Come to think of it, I don't b'lieve I ever saw you scared nuther—not when yeh *looked* it, I mean. Don't yeh never git some *skittish*, once in a while ? "

" *Me* ? Well," I parried, " I don't know, but I don't believe there 's a man aboard here that dares to tell just how he did feel last night."

Jack picked up a foot and fumbled with the toe of his shoe a few seconds, and then sat up and looked me fairly in the face:

" Wa-al, mebbe you 're right, but I want to say

right here, my *hair* mighty nigh *lifted* my hat. That 's how *I* felt. It was dummed hard work to keep goin', I tell yeh; and if I had n't got 'round putty lively, I 'd a flunked too, and I don't care who knows it, nuther. More 'n that," he continued excitedly, " I 'm ready to lick any ——— on the ship that says *he* wa' n't scart, too. Darn it! I don't blame the old man for being *scared*. Anybody that wa' n't a *fool* would a been scared blamed nigh out of his skin, by gum. What I despise him for is for *showin'* it the way he did. By ginger, I was scared enough, but I did n't blubber, nor flunk, as *he* done.

" I dunno 's that 's quite right, nuther," he added, reflectively. " Mebbe it 's all right to *show* you 're scared. That 's only *honest*, and a man can't help his *looks*. But jëst because yeh happen to be afraid, yeh don't have to give in and run. There hain't no use in *that*, and the man that does it hain't much account."

We were agreed upon this point, and Jack went on deck.





CHAPTER XXX

CHUMMING—AUTHORITY—INDISCRETION

AFTER the mishap at Cape Frio we kept well off from the coast, but it was becoming imperatively necessary that we land somewhere. Not only had we no vegetables, but the water supply was becoming dangerously short. It was not now so much a question of the quality as it was of the quantity. The water had passed through all the stages of decay and revivification of which it was capable, and what there was left of it was better for drinking purposes than it had been two months earlier. It had become first warm, then slimy, afterwards ropery, before it got to be jelly, and had finally entered upon a retrograde movement and become merely ill-smelling warm water. The changes in it had come about by easy stages, and after so much practice the water that we could not have drunk must have been very bad indeed. But it was essential to a continuance of the voyage by us that we have *some* kind of water, and unless the supply

were soon replenished there would be none at all on board.

It was, therefore, with a good deal of anxiety and more than the usual amount of grumbling in the forecastle that we sailed during the succeeding two weeks with no further sight of land. Then, one morning we awoke to find the island of Annabon, low down, distant and blue, but directly ahead. The breeze was very light and it was not until the middle of the afternoon that we came near enough to the land to make out its low hills and green foliage, and to see an occasional hut scattered along its shores.

Then, as we approached still nearer, several long canoes loaded with negroes paddled alongside the brig, and fifty or more of them came swarming upon our decks, every man of them vociferating at the top of his voice:

“ You me chum—you me chum.”

In a moment every member of our crew was surrounded by several of these darkies, each screaming his bit of English in his frantic efforts to secure exclusive attention to his mission. The din was tremendous, and it was some minutes before a chance came to me to inquire of Mr. Bowman:

“ What in thunder do these fellows want, sir ? ”

“ Oh, yeh 've got to take one of 'em for a chum—that 's all. He 'll take yeh in tow as soon as yeh

git ashore, and give yeh all the cocoanuts and bananas yeh want, and fill yeh up with his blasted liquor—fix yeh out with any blamed thing yeh ask for that they 've got; but ye 'll have to give him your soul and body and more too—if yeh can git any more to give him. They 'll treat yeh fust rate—yeh need n't be afraid of 'em. If yeh give 'em all yeh 've got, they 'll give you all *they* 've got. They 're *fair*, but they 're jest like any other land shark, they mean to pick yeh clean," he told me.

With this understanding of the matter, I selected an enormous negro whose mirthful eyes spoke of good-natured jollity, and, reaching out my hand to him, shouted above the hubbub:

"Here, I 'll take you. You 're the chap I want for my chum."

So far as I was concerned, that settled the commotion. I had secured a guardian who would permit no interference with my person while on the island, except such as should be approved by us jointly. I was the special bird set apart for his picking, and his vigilance against trespasser during our stay was as unceasing as it was successful. Everything the land afforded for my pleasure was forthcoming at the slightest hint from me, at a cost that proved the character given to chums in general by the mate to be slanderous.

We soon dropped anchor opposite a collection of huts that made up the town, and proceeded to make things snug in the rigging and on the decks. The sails had all been furled, and we were clearing the decks of loose ropes, when I overheard a conversation between the captain and Mr. Bowman:

“Hullo! guess that must be the gov’nor comin’ yonder.”

“Ye-ah, prob’bly ’t is. They say these fellers have a new governor for ev’ry ship that comes in here. The’ hain’t no more account than any other nigger when they ’re ashore; but jest as soon as a ship is sighted, a feller is rigged up to come aboard and live in the cabin as long as she stays, and then, when she sails, he ’s ended and goes about his business like any ordinary ducky. I ’ve heard say they have to go through a whole lot of tomfoolery to git a chance to play governor—I dunno what all; but it ’s suthin’ the priests make ’em go through—a lot a folderol they ’re allers up to. Fact is, the priest is the only governor they ’ve got, and he makes ’em dance to his tunes jest as he dum pleases, too,” declared the mate.

“Wa-al, anyway, I s’pose we ’ve got to take the old devil aboard, whatever he is. I kinder hate to—dunno what to do with ’im. I sort of hate to put ’im in with one o’ the boat-steerers, and there don’t seem to be no other place. We hain’t got no

room for 'im aboard, but I s'pose we 'll have to stow 'im somewheres."

" Bunk 'im in with the steward—he 's putty nigh that color," suggested Mr. Bowman.

The captain beamed as he glanced at me. " By George! that 's jest the ticket. That 's what I 'll do. The' hain't more 'n two shades diff'rence twixt 'em. Ye-ah, that 's what I 'll do. I vum, that 's jest the ticket."

Mr. Brown was then summoned, and, guarding his voice lest it be overheard by the occupants of the approaching craft, the master instructed him:

" You meet the old cuss, Mr. Brown, and be as polite and palaverin' as yeh know how. These sort of chaps are easy 'nough tickled, and you can always ketch more flys with merlasses than yeh can with vinegar. You 'll come a heap nigher to havin' things your way if they think they 're some punkins than yeh will if yeh go to settin' down on 'em. Be as slick to 'im as yeh can, and don't be afraid of raisin' y'r hat to the old devil—'t won't hurt none, and we 'll git along best that way."

Thus cued, Mr. Brown passed on forward, and presently bawled:

" Bring along a ladder here for the gov'nor. Lively, now! Drop a ladder for the gov'nor here, somebody."

As it paddled alongside the canoe was lost to

sight of me, and I was obliged to wait for a closer view of the great man. He was either not a ready climber, or else, what is quite as probable, he was anxious to impress us with his dignity, for it was fully two minutes after he reached our side before any sign of him appeared above the rail. Then a naval cap, encircled by a bright, gilt band rose, followed by a shock of grayish wool surrounding a face strongly suggestive of our lamented Jacko, and a pair of lack-lustre brown eyes were surveying us from over the railing. The next step on the ladder brought into view a very high collar, once starched white and stiff, but now hanging limp and yellow about the black neck. In front of and beneath this collar was an immense scarlet necktie, while between the lapels of a navy-blue coat, what had been a white shirt bosom shone forth, dirty, wrinkled, and sallow. Then, as he continued to rise, two brass buttons added brilliancy to the coat, and there was more shirt in the open space at the front of the august person.

The governor had now risen as high as the ladder alone would bring him, and, with an air of contemptuous indifference to Mr. Brown, who stood smiling, bobbing, and bowing awkwardly, surveyed the brig for fully a minute without stirring a muscle.

Mr. Brown was a nervous man, who had a violent dislike for anything not wholly sincere, and the

conduct of this negro must have taxed his patience to its limit, but he stepped forward now with every show of respect:

“ Sha’ n’t we help you, sir ? ”

Then, still speaking suavely, but to the boys gathered at the waist:

“ Here. A couple of yeh git up here and boost ’im over.”

“ No, no, no, suh. I don’ wan’ no help, suh. No, suh, no, suh. I c’n git aboard ’thout no ’sistance, suh,” the governor hastened to declare, in plain alarm at the offer of the officer. “ I c’n git aboard, suh.”

Tilted on its side, clinging as it glided along the top of the rail, a naked black foot suddenly appeared, followed instantly by a long, thin shank equally devoid of covering, and then, with a quick whirl, the governor came sprawling inboard, landing in a rumpled heap upon the deck.

“ Haw, haw—hope yeh did n’t hurt yourself, sir ? He, he, he—I ’m mighty sorry yeh fell, sir,” Mr. Brown hurried to say as he bent over the prostrate negro. “ You ’d better have let me help you over, sir.”

“ No, suh, no, suh, no, suh. Ise all right, I is. Ise all right, suh,” the governor insisted, scrambling hastily upon his feet and trying to resume his dignity.

The show had already been sufficiently ridiculous, but as the governor rose before us now, exposing his long black legs below the blue coat, contrasted with the tails of the shirt which hung around them, the impulse to shout with laughter was irresistible, and for a minute the brig resounded with my shrieks.

I was on the quarter-deck near the captain at the time, and he turned upon me savagely :

“ Shut up—shut up, I tell yeh, you giggling fool, you! Shut up,” he roared. “ Don’t yeh know no better ’n to make a hellabaloo like this right now! Shet up, I tell yeh, or I ’ll have yeh h’isted by the thumbs.”

But my fit was past all control, and its contagion quickly spread until the entire crew was convulsed with mirth. Even the captain succumbed to it, and it was more than a minute before he was able to bawl :

“ Jack, put that dummed little idiot in the fo’c’sle and keep ’im down there ’til he ’s wanted on deck.”

Jack led me in disgrace down into our den, where he stayed with me long enough to say :

“ Darn it, Tom, quit your laffin’. If yeh don’t, the old man ’ll be mad and yeh won’t git ashore. I don’t b’lieve he cares much yit; but I would n’t wonder if yeh ’d made a putty bad break of it. That old monkey looked pesky glum when he heered yeh bust out up there. Oh, come, come,

now! I 'll bet they can hear yeh clean aft this minute. Quit it, I tell yeh, or, likely 's not, yeh won't git ashore at all."

The idea of losing my liberty on shore was serious enough to check my laughter for the moment, and the fear of having compromised the captain in the estimation of the governor was not pleasant to think about, so I managed to control myself to say:

"I could n't help it, Jack—I just could n't help it. Did you ever see such an old baboon?" The picture rose so vividly before my mind then that I shrieked again in a second convulsion.

Jack squelched the fit by suddenly slinging me across the forecastle floor. "Mebbe I 'd better punch a little sense into yeh," he said. "Darned if I had n't oughter. But I don't want to stay down *here* all night," he continued. "The old man said you wa'n't to come up 'til yeh was wanted, so you stay down here," he commanded, and left me to myself.

After an hour had passed with no call for me, rightly believing the captain had forgotten the incident, I ventured up on deck, and nothing more was said to me about the affair until some days after we had left the island. Then Mr. Bowman confided to me:

"You come mighty close to cookin' our goose with that durned laff of your'n t' other day. It took

a whole lot a pattin' on the back and a deal sight o' ticklin' of the old fool 's throat to git him smoothed down after it. He caught on and was mad as a hornet for a spell; but the old man 's putty slick and rubbed him the right way 'til he got the fur straightened out again. Guess yeh 'd better be more careful how yeh git to giggling another time, had n't yeh, or we 'll have to take the damages out of your lay, yeh know."





CHAPTER XXXI

PRESENTS—MERCHANDISE—SCIENCE

BEFORE the arrival of the governor at the brig, our first visitors had left us and gone ashore, and as I came on deck after my confinement in the forecastle, they had just returned and were clambering in over the bulwarks. The man whom I had chosen as my chum at once espied me and came running forward extending a bunch of lusciously ripe bananas:

“ Me give—you give,” he grinningly announced.

“ All right, me give. Come on, Chummy,” I responded quickly, and led the way down into the forecastle.

The place was already filled to suffocation by the other boys and their chums, all of them talking, jabbering, and laughing at once. So I threw my bananas into my bunk, and, securing an old pair of pantaloons from my trunk, immediately went back on deck, followed eagerly by my chum.

As I presented my gift to the big fellow, I knew

I had struck the right chord in his heart, and that he was forever mine.

I was five feet five inches tall, and rather slender for even that height, while my chum stood six feet and some inches in his bare feet, and was proportioned to suit his length.

The cloth of the pantaloons was of good material and for several minutes defied every effort of the giant to force an eight-inch leg through a five-inch hole, but it was finally compelled to stretch away and my chum was arrayed. The garment failed by some inches to reach around the fellow's body at the waist, and the seams had been badly split in places in getting it on, but the beaming face looking down at me abundantly testified that the fit was quite satisfactory to the donee.

This first trial to please my chum had been so successful that I determined to try again, and, going again into the forecastle, brought out an old hat bequeathed to me by Johnson at the time of his desertion. In its day this hat had been a fairly good one, but now its band was mostly dried gudgeon and its crown but little more than holes. Yet in style it still ranked scarcely below that of the cap worn by the governor, and the countenance of my chum looked the picture of bliss as he donned it. No face could possibly have expressed more of genuine delight than shone upon every wrinkle, con-

tortion, and play of the black face that grinned at me from under that old hat.

By this time most of the other darkies had come on deck from the forecastle, and, my offerings being now complete, my chum proceeded to parade most shamefully before his less fortunate comrades. Back and forth, back and forth, from the bow to the edge of the quarter-deck, the fellow went, now lifting one heel and then the other in sidling twists to get a sight of the legs of the pantaloons, now raising his hat high above his head or taking it down to smooth and adore it, and all the time strutting about among the other darkies, oblivious of everything except his new possessions and his pride. No dandy was ever more proud in displaying his clothes than was my chum in thus parading himself on our deck.

If my chum had hoped to excite either the admiration or the envy of his countrymen in thus exhibiting himself, he signally failed. Every man of them was now absorbed in admiration for his own particular acquisitions, and paid not the slightest attention to the antics of my guardian. One struggled with a refractory coat sleeve; another limped about in pumps three sizes too small for his feet and airy at the toes; still another, in transports of ecstatic feeling, stood gazing at the tranquil face of the father of our country, printed on a red cotton

handkerchief. All alike flaunted their finery in the faces of the others, and all were uproariously merry—a crowd of child men, each member of which knew only of himself.

It was a show to be keenly enjoyed by boys such as we were, and we vied with each other in keeping it going fast and furious, until darkness settled upon the scene, and our guests, chattering and screaming in great good nature among themselves, left us for the night, to go ashore, while some of us wondered whether riches or knowledge were really sources of much of human happiness.

The brig carried an assortment of trinkets suitable for trading purposes at such islands, which the captain was in the habit of selling to us at rather exorbitant prices to be taken out of our income on the final settlement at home; and when it was announced the next morning that the mate's watch would be given liberty on shore for that day, we went aft to get something with which to pay our ways to good times. We had not finished choosing our outfits, when our chums came alongside in their canoes.

With the usual grin and hutching of his shoulders, my own chum came to greet me, and was about to reiterate his four or five words of English, when, suddenly looking out at sea, he yelled:

“ Hy, yi, yi—HY!”

He had seen a school of blackfish, lazily disporting, scarcely half a mile from the brig.

"Man the boats," shouted the captain.

And, forgetting all about our liberty, an hour later we towed four of the little whales alongside, and, setting our chums to work at the windlass, soon had them in on deck, ready to be cut up and sold at retail to the islanders, or tried out for their oil, as should seem to the captain best.

Then the governor came pompously from the cabin to ask:

"Is you gwine try dese out, suh?"

The question had been addressed to Mr. Bowman, who answered cautiously:

"Dunno, yit. That 'll be as the old man says, but I guess likely we will, though."

The governor turned rather anxiously to the captain, who was coming from the cabin:

"Is yo' gwine try dese, or sell 'em, suh?" he inquired.

"Wa-al, that 's accordin' to what *you* say," the captain answered with a show of deference. Then, as the governor's face beamed, the master continued: "I thought mebbe I 'd give one of 'em to *you*, and sort of peddle the rest of 'em out for stuff ashore. Do yeh s'pose we could git anything wuth while for 'em—water, or yams, or sech truck?"

"Yessuh, yessuh. I c'n 'range it, suh," the gov-

ernor declared with some animation. Then, beckoning to one of the darkies in the crowd on the deck and presenting him to the captain, he continued volubly:

“ Dis yuh man is an ol’ whaler, suh, same ’s I be, suh. We ’s bof of us sailed f’om New Bedford, suh, an’ he ’s a ’liable man, suh, an’ talks de language puffedly—*puffickly*, suh. Yo ’s gwine need a ’terpreter to transcribe de language, yo’ is sure ’nough, suh. Yo’ is sure want somebuddy to talk. Yo’ sure does, suh.”

“ Yessuh, yo’ sure does, suh,” declared the candidate for the office of interpreter, stepping forward and speaking glibly. “ Yo’ sure is want a ’terpreter here, suh—yo’ sure is. Ise a whaler, suh. Ise sailed fo’ years, an’ I knows ’Merican, an’ I knows the langwidge here, suh. Sure ’nough, suh, I c’n circumwent de langwidge here fus’ class, suh, an’ I almos’ gen’lly ’terprets here for gemmen what comes here, suh.”

“ All right, then,” the captain agreed. “ What ’s your name, my man ? ”

The darky grinned broadly and touched the wool on top of his head as he replied:

“ Thomas Jefferson, suh — Thomas Jefferson ’s my name, suh.”

“ By gum, I guess you ’re the real stuff all right then. Wa-al, suppose you begin to circumwent

your darned gab right now, and I 'll give yeh a good hunk of blubber for talking for me while I 'm here. Jest tell these fellers that I want 'em to hustle a lot a yams aboard. Or, better yit, if they 've got any sort of pertaters, tell 'em to fetch *them* along. And tell 'em we want all the pine-apples and cocoanuts and bananas we can eat — any durned thing they 've got that 's fit for a man to eat, tell 'em to bring along and we 'll trade 'em meat for it. Tell 'em to git a hustle on 'em, 'cause we hain't goin' to stay 'round here always, not by a jugful, and if their stuff hain't aboard when we git ready to go, they won't sell it to us."

A moment later the natives had left the brig for shore to secure trading materials.

Of course, these people should not have been fond of whale blubber. Whale blubber is of all foods perhaps the greatest heat producer. We were only two degrees from the equator, exposed to a scorching sun, and iced drinks would seem the proper thing. We should expect the Esquimaux at the poles to clamor for our grease; but who could have dreamed that these people would exchange cooling fruits for such stuff!

Yet the barter was eagerly accepted by the islanders, and our vessel was soon cloyed with green cocoanuts, ripe bananas, delicious pineapples, sweet potatoes, and juicy yams, traded for our fat.

Not only did they crave the meat, but every man of them haggled for the oiliest parts of it. Not a pound of the muscular fibre could be disposed of by us while a vestige of the blubber remained on the carcasses. So greedy were these people for the oil that many of them left the brig sucking pieces of the blubber precisely as they might have sucked at a watermelon, while on shore I saw numbers of men, women, and children lapping the oil from pieces of blubber they had laid in the sun to dry. It was an exhibition of beastliness not the less disgusting for being contrary to what might have been expected in the tropics.





CHAPTER XXXII

A CAPSIZE AND ENTERTAINMENT

IT was afternoon before we shoved away from the brig to land for our first run on the shore.

As had been the case at several places we had landed at before, there was no real harbor at Annabon—nothing but a bend in the shore line, open its whole length to the sea. The water was sufficiently shallow near shore to admit of anchorage, and the island was seldom subjected to dangerous storms; but for miles we could see the long rolls of white surf from the brig, and could hear its booming roar as it tumbled in upon the yellow beach.

Mr. Bowman took the watch ashore, the captain remaining on board to barter the fish. Jim had charge of our boat, the mate going in his own.

As we came to the edge of the rollers, Mr. Bowman inquired:

“ Did yeh ever land through a surf like this, Jim ? ”

“ Ye-us, I ’ve been through lots of times, but

somebody else was allers bossin' the trick. I guess I can make it, though," Jim replied.

"It 's a leetle ticklish, yeh know. Mebbe yeh 'd better wait and watch us go through fust. If yeh hit the right wave yeh 'll be likely to come through right side up; but if yeh happen to git the wrong one—*zip!* yeh 'll go." The mate illustrated his meaning further by swinging his arms over his head as though about to dive. "You keep an eye on us and see how we do it, and I guess you 'll fetch it all right."

The mate carefully adjusted his boat, watched for the right moment, and then shouted:

"Send 'er now, boys."

The men laid back upon their oars with a will, and the boat shot in upon the rushing wave, where she was caught by the natives waiting on the sand, and carried bodily high and dry.

As we saw the mate's boat gliding steadily in upon the foaming water, and noticed how easily the blacks lifted it and dashed up the beach, there appeared to be neither trouble nor danger in store for us.

It was our turn to go through the surf now, but to my surprise Jim hesitated about attempting it. For several minutes we sat, oars in hand, waiting the order to pull, but our leader stared vacantly ahead, finally only to burst out with:

“ Wa-al, boys, I ’ll be goll-darned if I know which one o’ them waves to take, *now*. Did any of yeh take notice which one of ’em them fellers went in on ? ”

The crew was dumb. Not one of us knew.

“ That ’s a — of a note, hain’t it! Told us we ’d have to take the *right* roller, and then never told us which one the right one was! By ginger, we ’d oughter be ducked, though, for not askin’.”

In vain Jim tried to obtain the information from the mate on shore; but no human voice could survive a passage over the surf.

Then Jim’s patience gave out:

“ Dang it! ” he exclaimed; “ we ’ve either got to go back and ask the old man or else go on through. I ’m blamed if I don’t hate to go back, and darned if I ’m goin’ to, nuther. What do yeh say, shall we *try* ’er, boys ? ”

“ Of *course*, ” we all agreed. “ Don’t go *back*, whatever yeh do. We can fetch it. Go ahead.”

“ Go it is, then, ” announced Jim.

The big steering oar headed the boat straight in for shore, and as the first roller started in, Jim gave us the word to pull.

For a single moment we went flying in toward the beach, then the stern of the boat suddenly flew into the air; I saw the blade of the steering oar

pointing at the sun, and all things were blotted out from me.

I learned afterwards that the boat had turned a complete somersault in the surf, pinning me down underneath her, where I must have quickly drowned but for the prompt action of my chum and some others of the natives, who rushed in to my rescue. The others of the crew were also in great danger from the undertow, from which they were dragged by the natives, but none of them were hurt.

My recollections of the succeeding minutes, after I opened my eyes to find myself on the dry beach, surrounded by my shipmates, are necessarily vague. I must have been stunned by some blow upon the head, and it was something like half an hour before I was able to stand up and walk into the town with my chum and several of the boys who had remained by me. Then, by the time we reached my chum's hut, my bruises were so sore that I was glad to throw myself on the ground in the shade of some huge palm leaves and lie there.

"I believe I 'll rest here a spell," I announced to the boys who had accompanied us, and they left me with my chum.

A moment later a tall, graceful, but ebony-colored girl of perhaps fourteen years, came rather bashfully to us from the hut. Her father spoke to her, and in a second she was nimbly climbing a cocoanut tree

near us by means of a series of wooden pegs driven into its sides.

This town was a collection of slightly more pretentious huts than those we saw at the first island we touched upon off the coast of Senegambia, and must have contained several hundred inhabitants. As is usual in towns, although the sun was still high and hot, the people were constantly going and coming around us as we lay, dividing my attention rather evenly between the girl, the green-husked coconuts, and themselves.

The natives were woolly-headed, thick-lipped, and shaded in color from bright yellow to coal black. The prevailing hue was mahogany brown, and there was a tendency to a thinness of shank that detracted somewhat from their otherwise well-developed appearance. In temper they showed charmingly amiable and contented dispositions, such as will scarcely be much improved by the advent of our more selfish civilization.

The passion for personal adornment was everywhere prevalent in a monstrously exaggerated style. One woman, whose Creator had given her a fine form, dimpled cheeks, rounded limbs, laughing eyes, and coquettish manners, would display a set of perfect teeth and a dust-besmirched tongue through an enormous bone ring set into the upper lip. Another would pass by wearing huge rings sus-

pended from from the tip of the nose, or set into the under lip, while not a few wore them, not suspended from, but set into the lobes of the ears. At an expense of lingering suffering and pain too frightful to think about, nearly every woman I saw over eighteen years of age had in some such way managed to make herself irredeemably hideous to look upon. It must have required years, every minute of them spent in discomfort, not to say agony, to have accomplished those terrible distortions of heaven-bestowed beauty.

It was strange and foolish but not without parallel among more civilized people. Look at the ring-burdened ears, the steel-bound waists, the leather-tied toes, the dozens of torturing devices surrounding us at every hand that men and women may follow the fashions! and then say how far we have advanced in these things beyond the savage we do not fear to despise. In what essential do the practices of the barbarian differ from those of our boasted civilization in this respect, other than in degree? When will we cease our nonsensical strivings to better the handiwork of the Almighty!

At last my chum's daughter descended from the tree and brought us two green nuts which she had thrown down, and seated herself on the ground with us.

A few cents will purchase as good a cocoanut in

almost any city of the United States to-day, but no wealth can buy such delight as I felt in drinking the milk from the first of those cocoanuts on that island. The girl was obliged to ascend the tree a second time before my thirst was satisfied, and then, after my stomach had been further filled with bananas, I fell asleep to dream of more cocoanut milk, until aroused by Frank at dusk:

“Come, come, come, wake up, ol’ fel’—come on. They ’re all of ’em down to the boat ready to go aboard. Come mighty nigh goin’ off an’ leavin’ yeh here ashore.”

“Well, I wish you had,” I yawned. “I would n’t have cared much.”

“No—s’pose yeh would n’t mind it a bit now, would yeh! Here ’s the mate chuck full—fuller ’n a tick, by ginger. So ’s the rest of us, I guess. S’pose you can *walk*? Fact is I hain’t none too blame *stiddy*, myself, ol’ fel’—tellin’ the *truth*—the hull dummed truth, yeh know. Had to take *some*, or git licked. Takin’ some was better ’n gitting walloped, now—now wa’ n’t it? Eh? Wa’ n’t it? So I took some more, jest to wash *that* down, yeh see.” He laughed in a silly, half-shamed way that proved his condition beyond doubt and stooped to assist me to my feet.

Not wishing to anger him by seeming more sober than he was, I called out:

“ Say, Chummy — les-les have nuther *drink*, Chummy.”

The girl who was still there must have understood the word “ drink ” as used among sailors, for, instead of bringing us a cocoanut as I had expected her to do, she brought us a gourd filled to the brim with fermented sap and offered it to me.

Frank instantly snatched the gourd from her hand and drained its contents before turning to me:

“ Not much—not much yeh don’t come none o’ *that* on me, my boy. Not much, yeh don’t, Tom. You—you ’ve got more ’n yeh can carry aboard of yeh now, and yeh hain’t goin’ to git no more ’f I c’n help it—not a blamed drop more. ’T won’t do, Tom—’t won’t do at all, I tell yeh.”

Saying this, he returned the gourd to the grinning girl, and after tickling her under the chin in a manner that seemed to please her remarkably well, he again resumed his lecture to me.

“ Tom, *you* ’re full. You *know* you ’re full. You ’re fuller ’n *I* be, Tom. Tha-thash whash she matter, y’r full, Tom. Full hain’t no name forsh—you ’re—you ’re jes’ sloppin’ over, y’r so—y’r jesh-sloppin’ full, Tom, and I ’ll never gish—never gishshe down to the boat—never gishshe t’ that boat, Tom, in the blasted worl’, Tom—never ’n the wide worl’, Tom—I never will, if yeh tech—if yeh jest tesh—tesh nuther dog gonied-drop.”

Then he seized me by the arm and dragged me toward the beach on a staggering run :

“ If yeh can’t walk—lean—lean agin *me*,” he continued as we ran. “ Lean up agin me, Tom,” he repeated over and over. “ Lean agin me. We got to gitthere—weesh mushgitthere, o’ the blamed fool ’ll—we mush—mush git—git—g’——”

Here Frank fell flat, and I carried him the rest of the way down to the boat, arriving there just as the natives were about to launch the last of the crew through the surf. In the condition of our men it would have been extremely hazardous to have attempted to make our way unaided past the rollers, but the islanders took the matter in hand and helped us out, after which we made our way to the brig.





CHAPTER XXXIII

A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY

THE next day the captain and Mr. Brown took the members of the other watch ashore for a day of liberty, and we remained on board to break out some water casks and dispose of what was left of the blackfish meat. The flesh was already putrid, but that fact did not deter the natives from trading fruit for it.

That evening, as our watch had done the night before, the captain and his men returned to the brig drunk, and their maudlin songs rent the air until near morning.

This custom of sailors to become intoxicated while on shore is by no means praiseworthy; but in passing judgment upon the men certain mitigating facts may well be considered.

To illustrate this, look at the situation of our crew at the time we visited that island. Not one of us had tasted a cool or even palatable drink of any kind for more than six months. Daily, during all

that time, we had held our noses and gulped down water so warm and so filthy that it might have gagged a dog. Then a cool draught, fragrant to smell, delicious to taste, clear and delightful to look upon, was offered before us, and we were urged to drink. The liquor had little of the sharp pungency or sting of civilized whiskey. It was most agreeable to the palate, only mildly intoxicating, and when the men once commenced to drink it the temptation to satisfy their thirsts became irresistible. To avoid its seductive influence, total abstinence was absolutely necessary, and exercise of the power of self-denial under the circumstances such as is seldom practised by those who most condemn the sailor for his drunkenness.

The habit is one not likely to be abandoned so long as its principal cause remains to foster it. Until suitable drink is provided for the men on ship-board there can be little hope of any reform in this direction among them.

The following morning our watch again landed—this time without accident.

To our surprise we found nobody on the beach to meet us. On both of the preceding days the shore had been lined with people eager to assist us; now only the roar of the surf was there to greet us.

“ I dunno—would n’t wonder if they ’d got mad about suthin’ o’ ruther. Did any of yeh hear about

any *row*, or anything to stir 'em up, yisterday ? Any fight, or rumpus, or anything ? ” the mate inquired.

No one knew of any cause for the absence of our chums. Then the sound of a bell slowly tolling reached us from the town.

“ Mebbe somebuddy 's dead, or suthin'. S'pose we go on up,” suggested Frank.

So we put aside our suspicions and walked up into the town.

The only building in the town not built of poles was one made of rough boards fastened upon a rude frame of timber, representing the wealth and power of the Roman Church. This structure stood near the centre of the village and its character was proclaimed by a large wooden cross surmounting a belfry in which was hung a small brass bell, no doubt contributed by some passing ship. It was the solemn tones of this little bell that had allayed our alarm.

As we arrived at this church we found the entire population of the island assembled, the hum of their suppressed voices reminding us of a swarm of bees.

We soon saw our interpreter in the outskirts of the crowd, and Mr. Bowman asked of him :

“ What 's up, Mr. President ? Anything the matter here ? ”

“ Yessuh, yessuh, sure 'nough there is, suh. Las’

night a man was bit wiff a snake, suh—a p'ison snake, suh, an' he 's daid, suh—he 's daid, suh," replied Mr. Jefferson. Then edging farther from the crowd, he continued: "Youse don' need to be scart, suh. Youse don' need to be scart about de snakes, suh, cayse de won't no mo' come here while youse is here, suh. De pries', he gwine charm de groun', suh, so 's de won' no mo' come 'round yere while youse here, suh, sure 'nough, suh. De won' no mo' come in dis yuh town 'til you goes, suh."

The earnest simplicity of the man left no doubt in our minds of his sincere belief in the announced doctrine of the church and of its power to control the serpents of Annabon. We remembered the riddance of Ireland of her snakes, and watched the succeeding ceremonies with eager curiosity, Mr. Bowman taking care to instruct us:

"Now, boys, don't none of yeh git to grinnin' or cuttin' up here. This show is going to be free, but jest remember it 's *their* circus, and they *believe* in it. If ye want to keep y'r heads whole, mind that and behave yourselves. 'T won't be safe for yeh to make too much fun of 'em right now."

At last the bell ceased its doleful clang, and a canopy appeared in the church doorway, borne aloft by poles at its four corners carried by boys. Under the canopy marched the priest, bearing a

crucifix held high in front of him, and dressed in black robes.

As the canopy and priest advanced, the people dropped behind him in couples, and presently the entire population of men, women, and children had formed in procession, the column passing completely around the church before it was ready to proceed. Then it started for the spot where the deceased had met his fate.

After the procession was fairly under way the priest commenced singing a low chant, in which the congregation behind him soon joined. It may or may not have been some hymn or chant prescribed for such occasions by the Roman Church, none of us knew or learned. In any event, its melody was as charming as its time was bad. I have many times since then heard negro voices blending in song, but never such harmony of hundreds of tones as rose from those songsters. We could not understand the words, and there was little of apparent concert; but as a whole it was marvellously delightful music to our uncultivated ears.

As the last end of the procession was about to pass us we joined it in couples and marched along with it.

The unlucky man had been bitten in a small copse of bushes near his hut on the outskirts of the town, and we had not far to go. As the column reached

the copse the song ceased, the procession halted, and the priest began to talk. For a little while he held forth in words we did not understand, and then the entire congregation knelt upon the ground.

The ceremony was now becoming too varied for novices such as we were, and we prudently stepped aside to watch it.

After kneeling a moment in silence the procession rose and passed in a circle about the copse, enclosing perhaps half an acre of ground, the while shrieking and howling in a manner strangely contrasting with their song of the moment before. The men and women who had but a few minutes earlier seemed imbued with the very spirit of Christian love were in a twinkling converted into a mob of raging devils, who with distorted faces screeched and bellowed and roared in horrible discord.

"Jingo, but hain't they gittin' hot!" Frank whispered to me. "I would n't mind bein' out o' this, would you?"

Then followed a sudden hush, as the priest began again to address the crowd. For several minutes he harangued in a loud, harsh voice which became louder and louder as he went on, during which his auditors preserved complete silence, although the tension of an increasing excitement shone from every countenance, until he ended with a terrible shriek.

In an instant after that, before the horrible sound had ceased to ring out, every member of that flock was in among those bushes, tearing them from the ground. Two minutes later not a twig remained standing of the entire copse—every bush had been jerked away to its roots.

The procession was then again formed about the open space, and the priest advanced alone to the centre of the circle, where he was quickly followed by two men bearing a tub of water. Then, mumbling as he went, the priest followed the tub as it was borne about, sprinkling the ground in all directions for some minutes, and the last ceremony required to make snakes wary of the vicinity of that town had been performed.

The congregation at once broke up, and a moment later I heard the voice of my proprietor: "You me chum," spoken beside me.

The heat of the sun was becoming intolerable, while I was still sore from the bruises incurred in the surf at the first landing, and during the next few hours I was very glad to loll about in the shade of my chum's palm leaves, drinking cocoanut milk and feasting upon the pineapples and bananas brought to me by his daughter, rather than follow the other boys in their rambles about the town. Then, as the sun went lower in the west, still accompanied by my chum and his girl, I wandered

down to the beach, where we amused ourselves until near night, stretched on the warm sand watching the surf tumbling in along the beach, and looking for shells, crabs, and the many curious forms of life everywhere abounding among the pebbles where the tide had gone down. It was a novel and most agreeable way of spending the time, and I was heartily sorry when the day was gone and the crew were again gathered at the boats ready to go out to the brig.

We remained at the island a week after that, but after the first few hours it held little of interest for any of us.

The village was a mere huddle of shanties, without streets, order, or system, and its inhabitants lived in squalor upon fruits, roots, and fishes. We were told by Thomas Jefferson that any head of a family who cared to stake it out was entitled to hold the exclusive possession of a small piece of land for any one year; but we saw no instances of the exercise of that privilege. In a country where every vegetable useful to the people sprang up spontaneously and of its own volition grew in rankest profusion, the ease-loving inhabitants were not likely to work much on the soil. Food was to be had anywhere for its pulling or picking; clothes were luxuries that need not be earned; society was plentiful and knew no classes. There was little

government and less law ; yet, despite the heat, the poverty, and the filth of the town, robust health and smiling faces met us at every turn. It was a great family of congenial spirits living together in peace and apparent happiness ; but, having distributed all our old clothes, pins, and gewgaws that we were able to muster, filled and restowed all our available water casks, and secured a fair supply of vegetables and fruit, without any feeling of regret we sailed away from the island upon another cruise for whales.





CHAPTER XXXIV

ODDS AND ENDS

A LIGHT breeze took us out of sight of Annabon, but left us to bake and stew upon the equator. Days followed days, and stretched into weeks, bringing us nothing but the same blazing sun, the same flickering waves, the same quivering air, the same loggy roll, the same loitering, the same drudgery, the same everything, unsavory and tedious to the last degree. The sea was glass and the atmosphere a furnace in which we lived, swore, and sweltered with no present hope of escape.

Within two weeks after we left the islands the last of the fruit had gone, and the kid came to us with nothing but hardtack, salt junk, and yams. The thirst induced by the briny meat was satisfied with bitter coffee or slimy water. The hardtack was now old, tough, and not seldom wormy. There was no butter and the cook made us no more biscuits. Even duff was becoming a memory and the peas and beans were never more hailed by us. In short, in

the forecastle we were now reduced to something far worse than prison fare at home.

In the cabin the table was still supplied with canned meats, canned peaches, canned tomatoes, canned corn, canned green beans, canned everything canned in those days, besides fresh biscuits, butter, sweet potatoes, pies, gingerbread, cakes, puddings, and other eatables, while Java and Mocha, tempered with canned milk and sugar, completed the *menu*. Thus the men in the cabin did feast, while the men in the forecastle did not.

This condition, found upon every American vessel of that day that had been long at sea, was one little calculated to improve the morals of the fore-castle, and as our officers came contentedly filled from their cabin, followed by the odors of their repasts, ideas surged through our brains that should never find valid excuse in the breasts of American seamen.

We in the forecastle were of the same race as our officers, and at home were accustomed to living as well. If there was any difference between the officers and the foremast hands it arose from want of maturity in the latter, a difference that should have forbidden the distinction in diet actually made on board. If severe toil, dangerous feats, or drudgery were to be imposed, if anything entailing tissue

waste was to be done or endured, the foremast hand was made to bear the brunt.

We may grant, if discipline is to be maintained, some differences between the officers and the men must be acknowledged. But should the man who does the least to waste his body be stuffed, while the man who does the most to waste it is allowed to starve, merely that a distinction such as this may be preserved? Is this place the proper one for marking that distinction and drawing the line between the man who directs and the man who obeys?

The American sailor is brave and faithful as any hero. Kind of temper, loyal to duty, ready in sacrifice, he deserves to be treated as a man. If it be necessary to subject him to some tyranny to keep him within disciplinary bounds, still do him justice. Never in all history has he proven recreant to duty; never has he left a ship while any other mortal remained; never has he shirked or skulked when his country called; ever has he been patient and enduring like the ox. No man merits more from his fellows than does this man who has been degraded beneath the brutes on our ships, fed upon food a pig would scorn, and exposed to tyranny against which a dog would rebel.

Many of them are drunken sots, wholly unfit for decent society, but they are so because of the treatment accorded them. Treated as brutes, they have

become brutes; deprived of better, they have accepted bad society; possessed of all the passions and weaknesses of mankind, dumped and left in the slums of the world, they have often slipped and fallen. They are what they are because of thousands of circumstances beyond control; but altogether those circumstances afford no excuse for feeding these sailors as hogs. They make it only the more wonderful that these men have remained the firmest in friendship, the bravest in danger, the truest in duty, of all the race.

The condition of which I complain was not peculiar to our brig. Ours was not a condition that was extreme of its kind. The brig was furnished with more and better provisions for her men, and her officers were more humane and considerate in their treatment of the men than was often the case upon such ships. The fault lay in a custom which has survived the barbaric ages and is permitted, if not encouraged, by maritime laws enforced in our courts. In modern times something—far from enough—has been done toward bettering such conditions. But if much more radical reforms were to be instituted and enforced, no loss would result to the nation or even to the owners of ships. No mutiny will ever occur and no ship will ever be scuttled by a properly fed American crew.

At last a fair breeze took us out of the doldrums

far down into the south Atlantic. There we scoured the ocean far and wide, but found not so much as a blackfish to stir our blood.

After some weeks of this eventless cruising we ran into one of the great fields of vegetation sometimes met floating on the surface of the ocean. It consisted of dense masses of weeds in detached patches varying in size from a few square yards to many acres, the roots, branches, and flowers of which were so intertwined, deep, and compact, as to sometimes offer serious obstruction to the passage of the brig through it.

“That ’s queer stuff,” Frank remarked in my hearing to Mr. Bowman one day.

“Ye-ah. ’T is sort of funny how that stuff grows, without ever techin’ land. It jest has its roots there in the water and grows and blooms and goes to seed jest like any other weed. Funny stuff, hain’t it! We ’re likely to run acrost a right whale amongst it, somewheres. This is what they live on. Yeh ’ll see ’em scoopin’ of it up by the boat load. We don’t often strike this stuff right where we be now—we did n’t expect to git into it here at all. There ’s a good deal of it farther south and a lot of it farther north; but yeh hardly ever find it ’round here. ’T ain’t likely we ’ll find this patch very big, but wherever yeh strike it, yeh can look out for right whales.”

At that moment the vessel went gliding across what looked like a roadway among the weeds. "There—one of 'em 's been through here," the mate continued. "Do yeh see that track? That 's where he went."

No movement was made to change the course of the brig, and presently Frank, in evident surprise, asked:

"Hain't yeh goin' to foller up that track, sir? I should think we 'd be goin' in there after 'im."

"No. No, my lad, that hain't the way to find them fellers. You don't want to look where they 've *been*, 'cause that ain't where they *be*. Yeh see, there won't no more of 'em be goin' through that road 'til it closes up. There hain't nothin' in it for 'em. They feed on the seaweed, jest as cattle does ashore on grass, and they hain't fools enough to go in another whale's tracks to git it, nuther. If yeh ever want to ketch right whales, don't never fool yourself no sech way as that."

For some days after that we continued butting our way through the tangle of seaweeds, but without effecting any captures.

We saw one right whale, but did not get him. He poked his head up through the weeds close by the brig one day and blew, but probably discovered the vessel, for he immediately sank without elevating his fluke. We had only a glimpse of him before

he had gone from sight. He seemed to be about the size of an ordinary cow sperm whale.

“ That feller would have made us about a hund’rd barrels,” the captain mourned.

The blubber of the right whale is usually thicker and more oily than that of his sperm brother, and he carried a mass of bone known as “ baleen ” in his mouth, which adds considerably to his value; but since we did not capture one of them, I shall not attempt their description further here.

“ Them fellers put up a lively fight with their tails,” Jack told us in the forecastle. “ We got two last v’yage, and yeh ’d jest better believe we worked to git ’em, too. Them fellers jest stood straight up on their heads in the water and flopped their darned flukes over, fust to one side and then to the t’other, helletelarrup, jest kërwallupin’ ’round there, every which way for Sundays. By Jiminy! but they did lather the water for us in great shape. If them darned fools had only known enough to ’ve chased us up, they ’d have made it putty conside’ble warm for us now, I tell yeh. As ’t was, ’t wa’ n’t no funny job gittin’ nigh ’nough to kill ’em—’t was mighty ticklish bisniss, I tell yeh.”

Anxious to verify Jack’s account of this whale, we did our duty at the masthead with unusual care, but without success; and a day or so later the brig sailed out from among the weeds into an open sea.



CHAPTER XXXV

THE END OF MY VOYAGE

ONLY three of the eighteen months for which I had shipped on the brig remained, and I was longing for release from what had become thralldom to me. We were somewhere south and a little east of the island of St. Helena, and, if we were to get home within the time limited for the voyage, it was time to head toward the north. So when the order came which turned the prow of the brig in a northwesterly course, it set my heart to throbbing in a tumult of elation; but we had scarcely trimmed our sails for the new tack before we were summoned aft and addressed by the captain:

“ Boys, we have n’t had much luck this season, the brig ain’t full, and we hain’t ready to go home yit. Fact is, we ’ve concluded to go ’round Cape Good Hope and cruise a spell in the Injun Ocean, and fill ’er plum full. We thought it would be best to tell yeh now, sost there would n’t be no com-

plaints after we leave next port. We 're goin' in to St. Helena fust and git a new outfit and land some of our ile. I mean to give yeh a good time while we 're in there—prob'bly we 'll give yeh three four days liberty—mebbe more. Then, on the way 'round, we 'll stop in at Cape Town and give yeh all a nuther liberty—so, besides makin' some money to spend when yeh git home, yeh 'll have a putty good time makin' of it. Hope you 'll all be willin' to go on 'round in the brig. It 'll make a leetle longer v'yage than yeh shipped for, but that don't make no diff'runce, so long 's we 're at it. We 've done putty toler'ble fair, as 't is, but we don't want to go home without fillin' up, and we can run 'er over afore we 've been 'round there a month. The whales seem to be putty much all druv out this side; but there 's plenty of 'em 'round there, and all we 've got to do is to go and git 'em."

"If you go into the Indian Ocean how much longer do you expect to be out, sir?" I inquired.

"Of course, we 'll have to be gone *some* longer—mebbe a year, and mebbe not so long. Yeh can't hardly tell. But it 'll be a mighty good trip for yeh, though. Yeh 'll get to see a whole lot of things yeh 've never seen afore, and yeh 'll like it better 'round there than here. There 's more places to stop at—more places where we can git fruit and

have fun. The cruises 'll be shorter, and the landin's won't be so fur apart."

As if waiting for further inquiries, the captain paused for a moment, and then added:

" We thought we 'd better tell yeh, boys, sost there would n't be no misunderstandin' 'mongst yeh. We 're goin' 'round there, anyhow."

The cure for whaling fever had been effective, and I was instantly resolved not to go "'round there." I knew nothing of my legal rights in the premises, or, having such rights that were in danger of infringement, how to enforce them. It was plain to me that the captain had no moral excuse for taking me out of the Atlantic Ocean on a voyage so greatly in excess of the one for which I had shipped as he now proposed. If the legal and the moral right were not in this instance the same, then it was clear to me that it would be morally right for me to desert the vessel, and I became determined to do so if I could not otherwise obtain a discharge.

The fresh trade winds of that region bore us rapidly along, and in a few days the little island stood looming in the distance before us.

The island rises abruptly several hundred feet out of the ocean, is almost circular in form, and hardly ten miles in breadth. It looked like some enormous fortress, its walls coming perpendicularly up from the sea.

" They say that when God Almighty got through

makin' the world He jest dumped what rocks He had left down here, and let 'er go," Mr. Bowman told us as we sailed toward it.

With its steep bluffs unrelieved by any green thing, until we came opposite Jamestown, one of its two landing-places, the island did look like a stone pile. Here nature had at some time cut a slice of this cheese, and in the niche so made a city of some three thousand or more people now lay, luxuriantly dressed in green and white. A shelf formed from the débris of this singular break extended out for some distance in front of the town, affording anchorage for a considerable fleet. From the edge of the water the land sloped gently back, narrowing as it went, until something like two miles inland, and at about a fourth of the height of the surrounding bluffs, the bottom of the slice ended in a point. It was in this triangular space, hedged in on the land side by two almost perpendicular cliffs, that the city had been built, access to the rest of the island being obtained by means of a system of zigzag roads cut out of the solid rock on the left-hand side looking in from the sea.

So far as I saw, except gun-carriages, donkeys, and a few horses owned by English officers, the island could boast of no conveyance. If there were any other vehicles for carrying man or goods, they were kept well out of sight.

The half or three fourths of a mile immediately in front of Jamestown and a still narrower strip of land on the other side of the island were the only spots on the coast anywhere from which a man could not have thrown a stone into blue water. On most seacoasts, for miles away from shore the water is shallow and of a greenish color; but here the clear crystal blue water everywhere seen in mid-ocean proved the unfathomable depth of the sea close to the shore line.

At that time St. Helena was in the direct route of all ships bound from India to either Europe or the United States, and nearly every ship on coming north from the Cape of Good Hope stopped there for water or supplies. But that year the Suez Canal was opened to the ships of the world, and must have diverted the most of the commerce from the island, yet Jamestown must always remain an important ocean depot.

In the seven weeks that I stayed on the island the flag of almost every nation was unfurled in its harbor, and ships came and went away every day. To the right of the harbor, on the heights overlooking the approaches to it, great guns were planted, and on the left, from portholes cut out of the solid cliff, still other cannon frowned, while the British flag waving from its flagstaff proclaimed the nation thus careful to protect its possessions in this distant sea.

As we sailed into the little harbor in front of the town, a great ship was passing out carrying at her peak the Stars and Stripes. For many months we had not seen the old flag, and the wild cheering of our crew, together with the hearty response from the decks of the ship as we flung our own flag to the breeze, attested the love of country so deeply imbedded in the heart of every sailor.

It was dusk before we were finally settled and anchored in the spot assigned to us by the authorities in the harbor.

The next morning, the moment the captain made his appearance on the quarter-deck, dressed in his best suit and prepared for a trip on shore, filled with but one idea, I went to him and at once plunged into my subject:

“ Captain, I have come to you for my discharge.”

He seemed embarrassed for the instant, but quickly recovered and stood for half a minute looking steadily at me before he replied:

“ Wa-al—*wa*-al! *Your* discharge!”

“ Yes, sir. I think I am entitled to it.”

“ D——n it all! I ’d jest like to know what *you* want your discharge for. Here you ’ve been treated better ’n any boy I ever see on a ship the hull tarnal v’yage, and now yeh come here talkin’ like *this*. Hain’t yeh *satisfied* with the way yeh ’ve been treated aboard here ? ”

He could have said nothing to me better calculated to break my determination to leave the brig than this; but my mind was immovably fixed in its purpose. “*That* is n’t it, sir. I would be a fool not to understand and appreciate your kindness to me. I would rather sail with you than with anybody I know of, and if I meant to keep on goin’ to sea I would n’t say a word. But I am not, and want to get home.”

“Fiddlesticks, Tom!” he exclaimed, in a slightly mollified tone. “You ’re homesick. That ’s all the matter with yeh—you ’re homesick. You saw that ship goin’ out of here last night and she made yeh think of the folks, that ’s all. I thought of ’em myself for the minute, and would have been blamed well glad to ’ve gone home myself. That ’s all that ails you—you ’re a mite homesick, but you ’ll git right over it. Jest as soon ’s you ’ve had a run ashore here, you ’ll be all right, and feel diff’runt about it.”

I shook my head at this, and he went on:

“Why, hang it all, boy, I ’d made up my mind to make a *boat-steerer* of yeh afore we git home—if there was a chance open, I ’d do it to-day. Don’t git no sech nonsense into y’r head as to want your discharge, but git along forrard and let ’s hear no more about it.”

Then, as if the matter was finished, he resumed

his customary beat across the deck, until he found me still standing there. He frowned and said sharply :

“ What the blazes—hain’t you gone yit ! ”

“ No, sir. If you are not going home from here I want my discharge. My mind is made up, sir,” I said.

My manner was too abrupt and the announcement of my purpose too bold for successful diplomacy with the captain. He was only irritated by it.

“ So, *so*—that ’s where yeh be, is it! You ’ve made up your mind, have yeh ? Wa-al, wa-al, now! Yeh ’ve made up your mind to *leave*, have yeh ? Wa-al, now, I guess we ’ll have suthin’ to say about that. I want yeh to understand that *I* ’ve jest made up *my* mind about your leavin’, too. Now you quit this foolishness short off, or I ’ll shet yeh *up*. Do yeh understand ? You quit it, or I ’ll put yeh where you won’t git ashore *this* trip. You ’ll git no discharge out of me, and yeh won’t *leave*, nuther. Now, suh, you git forrard, and don’t yeh open your head to me ag’in about no discharge. Do yeh hear ? You git forrard and behave yourself or there ’ll be some trouble twixt you ’n me.”

A man at the masthead of a whaler who is without eyesight is neither ornamental nor useful, and the captain knew my vision to depend upon spectacles, several pairs of which were at the moment stowed

away in my trunk. Furious with anger, I rushed forward to the fore-castle, and ran back to the quarter-deck with the extra glasses.

The captain stared open-mouthed at me as I came panting on and threw the spectacles over the side into the sea:

“ There, sir!” I shouted. “ Mebbe you can *take* me along. But I don’t believe it ’ll do you much good to do it.”

“ Wha-what in h—ll have you done ? You——,” he gasped.

“ I meant what I said, sir,” I interrupted. “ If there is any way I can help it, I ’m not going out of this port in the brig, sir.”

“ Yeh *hain’t* ! Wa-al, yeh *be*. You git forrard now and *stay* there, or I ’ll hide yeh, by gum. I ’ll hide yeh good,” he bellowed, white with anger.

“ I expect you *can* hide me, sir,” I admitted. “ But you won’t do it without my doing my best to stop yeh. I know what is *right*, and mean to stand by it,” I declared hotly.

Whether the captain saw something in my face that discouraged the idea of threshing me, or whether he knew that from a legal standpoint my position was sound, whatever may have been the cause of his conduct, without saying another word, he turned upon his heel and went down the cabin gangway. I stood waiting to be arrested until I

saw the captain come out of the forward entrance to his quarters and, getting into the mate's boat, start for shore.

The next morning I was summoned before the captain, who smiled and greeted me kindly enough :

" I guess yeh was a bit hasty yisterday, wa' n't yeh, Tom ? You don't want no discharge, *I* know. Go and git rigged up and we 'll go ashore and git yeh some more specs, and then yeh can have your liberty with the rest of the boys."

I saluted, said " Aye, aye, sir," and obeyed so far as to put on my best suit of clothes.

A few minutes later we entered a store in Jamestown where spectacles were offered for sale, and the captain addressed the young man in charge of the showcase :

" This young feller needs some specs. Wish you 'd fix him up, will yeh ? "

" Aw, yes, to be sure, sir."

The clerk glanced at my glasses—the single pair left, and asked :

" Myopic ? "

" It 's the cap' that wants 'em, *I* don't," I declared, purposely evading the question.

" Oh, aw—hi beg your pardon. Hi understood you to say it was the young man who needed glasses, sir ? "

The captain, now very red in the face, glared at me :

“ So I did, you little whelp, you! Don’t you come none of your monkey shines on me here! Don’t you do it!”

The clerk, now without apparent trepidation, turned to me suavely:

“ Will you please wemove the glasses you ’ave, sir? I wish to compare them with some hi ’ave ’ere.”

He removed my spectacles himself then, and held one of the glasses a moment before one of his eyes.

“ You are myopic to a considewable degwee,” he announced presently. “ If hi cannot match them pwecisely, hi can give you a new bow; these seem badly bent.”

He took a case of concave lenses out, and after some minutes found what he desired.

“ Aw, ’ere it is, sir, pwecisely, hi am sure,” he said, coming smilingly to me, and holding out a pair of spectacles. “ Hi think you will find them pwecisely the same as those you ’ave on, sir.”

His intelligent face was alight with pleasure born of applied science, and he continued to beam upon me as I placed the instruments on my nose.

“ ’Ow do they do, sir?” he asked, confidently.

They were an admirable duplicate of the spectacles I had laid aside, but I most ungraciously demanded:

“ What do you call these things anyway—window glass?”

“Aw, sir! They are the finest pebble, sir,” he insisted, in an injured tone. “The vewy *finest* pebble, sir.”

“I don’t mean *that*—what *are* they? Have n’t you got anything that will come nearer to fitting me than those things?”

Something in this brazen reply seemed to lend courage to the captain, who broke in with:

“Give ’im the best you ’ve got in the shop, young man. He wants the best there is goin’. Don’t try no cheatin’ on us. He ’ll want four, five pairs, anyways, and more if yeh ’ve got ’em, but they want to be all *right*.”

The clerk eyed me dubiously. “’Ave these not impwoved your vision in *some* degwee?” he inquired.

“The difference between seeing and not seeing is mighty little when it comes to a pair of glasses,” I boldly insisted.

“To be sure—to be sure. A vewy slight difference in glasses makes a vewy great difference in their effect,” he unguardedly confessed. “If you please, hi will twy once more.”

After some fumbling among the spectacles in the showcase, during which the captain paced impatiently back and forth in the store, a second pair was brought out and offered to me.

“Kindly twy these,” the polite clerk directed.

I put them on and looked about the room a moment, and then truthfully asserted:

“ These are a mighty sight worse than those others were. They were not so very bad, but these things make me seasick.”

Then he offered me glass after glass, one after another without regard to theory or science, until there was no longer need for evasion in my remarks. At the end of it all, my own glasses failed to fit.

“ ’Is eyes are vewy peculiah, sir — wemarkably peculiah, sir,” the clerk finally decided in despair. “ The glass ’e wears is appawently myopic, sir, but hi ’ave twied evwy concave lens we ’ave on ’im, sir.”

“ What ’s that yeh said was the matter with ’im?” the captain asked.

“ The glass ’e ’as on is myopic, sir.”

“ Wa-al, I ’ll be darned! He allers stuck to it he was nigh-sighted, and it ’s funny you can’t fit ’im. Mighty funny! But mebbe you know best what ’s the matter with ’m.”

“ ’E certainly is *vewy* myopic, sir. Hi am *sure* of that, sir. ’E is vewy myopic, there his no doubt of that; but hi fear ’e is halso hastigmatic, per’aps to so considewable a degwee as to hinterfere with clearness of wision, sir. ’E is undoubtedly myopic, but ’e is hastigmatic, too, sir, and such conditions wequire a specially gwound glass, and we have

weally nothing suitable to 'is case on the island, sir."

The captain turned suddenly from the clerk to me and bellowed :

" You 're a dod-blasted humbug, that 's what *you* be! Mebbe you can make a fool of this dummed idiot here, but yeh can't fool *me* with no sech blamed trumpery. No, sir! Yeh can't fool me no sech way. *I* know what ails yeh, if *he* don't."

Then he wheeled around to the astonished and embarrassed clerk :

" What 's the bill for all this tomfoolery ? "

" The *what*, sir ? "

" The *bill*, yeh darned mummy of a *Fohnny*, yeh—the *bill*. What 's your *charges*—what 's the *racket* for that dummed gabble about your opics and stick-itatisms and sichy ? What 's the *damages*, yeh gump, for lettin' that boy bamboozle yeh, like he 's done this hour ? By hoky, I 'll bet he don't git run up agin no sech fool as you be down in Cape Town—not by a blamed long short, he don't. I 'll bet I 'll find somebody down there that knows suthin' about his bisness. You 've jest let that boy *play* yeh—he 's euchred yeh out o' your eye-teeth, by gum. That 's what he 's done, whipped yeh into fiddle-strings at your own game, by ginger. You 're a *Fohnny*, and that 's all yeh be—jest a Johnny."

Having thus given vent to his feelings, without waiting to inquire further as to the "bill," the captain beckoned to me to follow, and we went together out upon the street, where he began at once:

"I swow, Tom, I dunno what to think about yeh. I vum, I dunno. I dunno whether yeh was foolin' him, or whether yeh was foolin' *me*; but, by thunder, I believe yeh was tryin' to fool both of us." Then, for a moment, I could hear him chuckling softly, before he broke out again. "Haw, haw, haw! Gy, Tom, you're slick, anyhow. 'T was most as good as a circus. 'Winder glass,' says you. 'What do yeh call these things anyway,' says you, 'winder glass?' Haw, haw, haw! And by jinks, that feller did n't know in two minutes whether he was afoot or horseback. No, by ginger, he did n't. Gy, but 't was wuth takin' yeh ashore for. Wa-al, you're a good one any way they take yeh, and I don't b'lieve yeh 'd *sneak* off, nohow. Would yeh? If I was to let yeh go by yourself, would yeh sneak off?"

"No," I declared. "If it came to the worst, I might even do that. If I can get away, I'll do it; but I'm not ready to *run* yet."

He chuckled again and handed me an English shilling piece. "Here, that'll pay for a boat to take yeh off aboard. I guess I can trust yeh for that," he said, and walked away.

It was evident to me now that the captain intended to take me at least to Cape Town before releasing me. The mere loss of my extra spectacles would not be sufficient to induce him to let me go. Some other tack must be tried. So, after getting back on board the brig, I consulted Jack, as the most experienced man in the forecabin and the most resourceful.

“ Why don’t yeh try the ’Merican counsel ? ” he asked. “ He ’ll let yeh go in a minute. You jest try *him*. ”

“ What ’s he got to say about it ? ” I inquired.

“ Wa-al, now, I ’m skunked ! He, he, he ! Here ’s the best adlicated feller aboard, and he don’t know *that*. There hain’t no mistake about it, this is a dummed funny world ! Don’t know what the ’Merican counsel ’s got to say about it ! Wa-al, wa-al, Tom, you be green — greener than a punkin, by gum. I thought everybody knew the counsel was boss in foreign ports. I vow, you ’re a bigger gump than anybody ever ’d a took yeh for, if yeh don’t know that much. Went an’ busted up all your specs, and mebbe lied about ’em into the bargain, for all I know, when all yeh had to do in the world to git off was jest to go to the counsel. Of course, he ’ll let yeh off — can’t help lettin’ yeh off. Why, it ’s all plain sailin’ and slick ’s grease. I ’ll be mighty sorry to have yeh go, Tom, but you go to

him and he 'll give yeh your walkin' ticket all right."

A week passed after that, during which the rest of the crew were allowed liberty on shore, while I remained at work and a prisoner on the brig, although the captain had readily promised to take me ashore to interview the consul. Then, on being told by Frank that the brig was likely to sail almost any day, I wrote a letter to the consul and sent it ashore by a boatman from the town. The letter reached its destination promptly, and an hour or so later found me with my trunk at the office of that commercial agent. There was no trial or examination of any kind before the officer. The captain had happened to be in the office of the consul when my letter arrived, and, without evasion, admitted the truth of its statements, upon which my discharge had been ordered at once.

The captain met me cordially enough outside of the office of the consul. "I don't blame yeh much, now it's all over," he declared. "You'd have better come along, though. I'd have done well by yeh, and yeh know that; and if yeh change your mind before we leave, I'll ship yeh over now."

Thus my connection with the brig as one of her crew was finally severed and I was sent by the consul to a sailor boarding-house to await some ship bound for home.

The brig remained in the harbor several days after that, and at the invitation of the captain I visited her a number of times, and took one meal in the cabin with Frank.

The table on shore was better provided than that of the brig's cabin even, but it lacked the good-fellowship prevailing on the vessel. Even big Antone seemed to forget his grudge against me, and when I ate in the forecabin insisted on my dividing the contents of the kid. There was but one man on board for whom I did not have a genuine liking. The slovenly laziness of Kenney was too pronounced and chronic to be overlooked. The Portuguese members of the crew were superstitious, excitable, lacking in self-reliance in times of danger, easily frenzied, and probably treacherous, but they still possessed generous impulses and traits which entitled them to some respect. They owed their worst faults to early education and the peculiar temperament of their race, matters for which they could not be rightly held responsible. But the cook had no such excuse to offer. All the others on the brig were typical American whalers, technically not the best of sailors, but in kindness of heart and cool-headed bravery the equals of any men.

The money due to me from the voyage was all paid over to the consul, who used it for payment of

my board bill while on the island and for my passage home seven weeks later.

My stay at St. Helena was most agreeable. But for a want of variety, the climate would have been perfect. Each cloudless day was followed by gentle showers in the night-time, leaving the air for the new morning clear and cool. Day after day the trade-wind blew from the one direction, never hot and never cold. And we were assured by old residents this was the unbroken record of the weather of the island for many years. Once away from the rock-bound coast, we came upon the valley in which Napoleon pined and died, a valley clean, beautiful, luxuriantly fertile, restful—a very Paradise.

Its isolated situation, thousands of miles from all the rest of the world, and the character of its inhabitants seemed the only drawbacks to the island as a permanent residence. The masses of the people were blacks, mulattoes, and low-grade whites, all exclusively employed in ministering to the worst passions and tastes of seamen and soldiers from every clime, and all without apparent sense of shame, honor, affection, or humanity. A little aloof from these were the merchants and professional men, permanent residents who, after years of constant association with the worst elements, had lost the better parts of their moral perception, and were only less disgustingly open in evil practices. Then there was

the garrison of officers and men, and the small army of consuls, or commercial agents, representing nearly every civilized country on the globe. Lastly, the fluctuating population of seamen and adventurers which daily came and went in ships formed an essential portion of the community, without which it must have soon dwindled to insignificance.

A large and well-filled marine hospital stood upon the high ground back of the town; but I do not remember seeing either a church or a schoolhouse on the island.





CHAPTER XXXVI

IN CONCLUSION

MY story might well have closed with the middle of the last chapter; but it seems proper to allude once more to the character of its real hero before making the final exit.

For many years it has been the fashion to portray the sperm whale as an animal of undoubted courage, who is ever ready to assume the offensive against his foes, and it will seem to some persons to be an act of unjustifiable presumption in me to cast a shade of suspicion upon this long-approved and attested idea. But to end this tale with no word spoken against this doctrine would be tacitly to add my testimony in its support.

It may be conceded that this whale is a *dangerous* animal. We had more than one narrow escape from serious injury in our experience with him. Even a whale floating in death on the surface of the ocean is a dangerous thing, for an ocean liner running upon him at speed would as surely be sunk as

though she had struck a derelict. A boat placed in the pathway of a running cachalot would be hopelessly crushed, and a man smashed by his fluke would never be found. Any animal possessing the weight, strength, and agility of this whale must always be the subject of most prudent and cautious attacks.

But has he the temper and courage usually attributed to him? Has he the intelligence and pertinacity essential to the fighting animals? Is he aggressively vicious and constant in his purpose? Will he fight as the panther fights?

If I were to base my opinion exclusively upon my own observation of the whale, my answer would unreservedly and unhesitatingly be, to all these questions—*never*. He has hardly the grit to slap a fly.

We fastened to four full-grown bulls—whales reputed to be the most savage fighters—and killed three of them. We chased a dozen such bulls for hours after having pricked one of them with a harpoon, and failed to overtake them. Twice our boats were surrounded by unnumbered sperm whales, and while so in their midst we safely struck and killed ten cows.

If, as some writers would have us believe, it is true that these animals are ferocious brutes, eager to battle with man, is it not singular that not one among all the whales we encountered should have

offered to fight us ? that out of a probable hundred and seventy-five of the beasts offered the chance, not one should have accepted our challenge?

We missed collisions any one of which would have made us think we were in a fight ; but not once did any whale make a persistent attack upon a boat. So far as I was able to discover, every whale we came near did his utmost to get away beyond our reach ; the object of all their struggles seemed to be to escape.

But my experience was too limited to oppose to the mass of undisputed evidence offered upon the subject by others. There have been numerous tales of fights with these bulls, written by men of seeming credibility, and more than one old whaler whose truthfulness I am not disposed to question has related to me instances of real conflicts that have occurred within their actual knowledge. Some of these may be readily accounted for without admitting that the whales engaged showed any signs of skill or design ; but others remain which tend to prove that at least a few of the old bulls really have the wit and the perseverance commonly ascribed to the many. Yet it remains my conviction that vastly the greater number of them are as cowardly and as timid as ewe lambs.

THE END

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